

DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY TRAINING FOR INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN PENANG, MALAYSIA: PRESERVING NATIONAL IDENTITY AND FOSTERING A SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM

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ABSTRACT

The number of Indonesian migrant workers abroad, especially in Malaysia, is very significant. One of the major challenges faced by migrant workers is the influence of foreign culture that comes through the media, both social media and other mass media. This influence can lead to the erosion of their sense of identity and nationalism towards Indonesia. Along with the development of information technology, digital media has become one of the main communication channels, but it also has a negative impact if it is not used wisely. One important aspect for Indonesian migrant workers, especially in Malaysia, is the spirit of nationalism. With the spirit of nationalism, Indonesian migrant workers are independent and work hard to support their families, even though they often get unpleasant treatment, especially from the Malaysian community and authorities. The goals of this community service activity is Provide digital media literacy training to Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia so that they can use technology intelligently, productively and wisely. Meanwhile, among the targeted outputs of this community service activity is the publication of activity report on the mass media. The results of distributing the activity questionnaire showed that most participants were satisfied with the activities they participated in. The results show that this International Joint Community Service Program facilitated collaboration between universities and organizations to support Indonesian migrant workers in Penang, Malaysia. Through a digital media literacy workshop, it promoted national identity, cultural respect, and social responsibility, demonstrating effective international partnerships in enhancing community empowerment and social cohesion.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Self-identity, Sense of Nationalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The number of Indonesian migrant workers abroad, especially in Malaysia, is very significant. As quoted from cnbc.com (2023), the Statistics Indonesia (BPS) reported that the number of Indonesian foreign workers was 93,761 people in 2020. They work in both the informal and formal sectors with various educational backgrounds and different skills. Meanwhile, if we look at the latest data from the Ministry of Human Resources (KSM) of Malaysia, there are 1.3 million foreign workers currently in Malaysia and working in sectors that are allowed to employ them, including in the informal sector. On the other hand, Malaysia is one of the neighbouring countries that is very close to Indonesia, only separated by the Strait of Malacca in the West Malaysia region. Meanwhile, the Sabah and Sarawak regions have land borders with Kalimantan. The short distance is one of the factors causing many Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) to seek their fate in neighbouring countries (Putri, cnbcindonesia.com, 2023).

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Along with the development of information technology, digital media has become one of the main communication channels, but it also has a negative impact if it is not used wisely. One important aspect for Indonesian migrant workers, especially in Malaysia, is the spirit of nationalism. With the spirit of nationalism, Indonesian migrant workers are independent and work hard to support their families, even though they often get unpleasant treatment, especially from the Malaysian community and authorities. At the same time, they are able to face Indonesian diplomats with their heads held high, even though some Indonesian migrant workers are not given excellent service. Therefore, it is important to find out the dynamics of nationalism of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. In the era of social media, Indonesian migrant workers play an active role in voicing their aspirations including nationalist sentiments (Maksun, 2023). Therefore, it is important for them to have adequate digital media literacy skills in order to filter relevant and useful information, as well as strengthen their love for their country and national identity. Digital media has a significant, broad and complex impact on society and culture. Combined

with the internet and personal computers, digital media has led to disruptive innovations in publishing, journalism, public relations, entertainment, education, commerce and politics. Digital media has also posed new challenges to copyright and intellectual property laws, prompting an open content movement in which content creators voluntarily give up some or all of their legal rights to their work. The emergence of digital media and its impact on society suggests that we are at the beginning of a new era in industrial history, called the Information Age, perhaps leading to a paperless society where all media is produced and consumed on computers (Dewar, 1998). Digital literacy means having the skills needed to live, learn and work in a society where communication and access to information are increasingly via digital technologies such as internet platforms, social media and mobile devices. Digital literacy does not replace traditional forms of literacy, but rather builds skills that form the basis of traditional forms of literacy (Jenkins, 2009).

Through digital media literacy training, it is hoped that migrant workers can understand how to use and utilize digital media wisely, recognize their rights as Indonesian citizens, and rekindle their sense of nationalism.

Statistics Indonesia (BPS) conducted a survey of 921 Indonesian migrant workers who worked abroad during the period 2018-2023 and have now returned to Indonesia. This study aims to understand the characteristics of, Indonesian migrant workers both in terms of economic, social, legal, and cultural aspects. When viewed from the last level of education, most Indonesian migrant workers are graduated of secondary education, the most at the high school/vocational high school level reaching 33.22%. This group is noted to be more ready to work in the service, manufacturing, and office sectors than groups with lower education, so they are more popular. The age of departure of Indonesian migrant workers is quite diverse, dominated by the productive age group between 25 and 44 years. The majority of Indonesian migrant workers departed for the first time at the age of 40-44 years, followed by the age range of 25-29 years (Yonatan, 2025).

Based on these data, the target participants for this training activity are Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia aged 18 to 44 years, both male and female.

Based on the introduction above, the purposes of this community service activity are as follows:

1. Provide digital media literacy training to Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia so that they can use technology intelligently, productively and wisely.
2. Strengthen the identity and spirit of nationalism of Indonesian migrant workers through a deeper understanding of national values.
3. Improve the ability of Indonesia migrant workers to filter information received through digital media, so that they are not influenced by hoaxes or false information.

Encourage Indonesian migrant workers to become information activist by sharing true and positive information about Indonesia with their communities.

The priority problem of this community service activity is how lecturers can not only contribute to internal campus problems, but also to the community outside the campus through the knowledge and competencies they have. In this context, it is digital media literacy. As is known, the existence of digital media, especially social media, has changed many aspects of human life. As stated by Raju (2025), social media has completely changed how we engage, communicate, and get information. It has several benefits, including interacting with loved ones, networking, and sharing content and ideas on a platform. Nevertheless, there are drawbacks as well, such as issues with privacy, the dissemination of false information, and the possibility of cyberbullying.

So, the priority problem of this community service activity is to provide understanding and skills to Indonesian immigrant workers in Malaysia in using and utilizing digital media, especially social media, in order to strengthen their identity and continue to increase their spirit of nationalism.

The solution offered through this community service activity is to increase the understanding and skills of Indonesian immigrant workers in Malaysia regarding the use and utilization of digital media, especially social media, to develop their identity and increase their spirit of nationalism. So, besides that, they can also play an active role as information activists who can spread good information to their fellow colleagues.

- a. Through this community services activity, the Indonesia immigrant workers in Malaysia hoped could have ability to find, evaluate, and organize clear information through writing and other media on various digital platforms. Digital literacy is evaluated by grammar, composition, typing skills, and an individual's ability to produce writing, images, audio, and designs using technology. While digital literacy initially focused on stand-alone digital and computer skills, the rise of the Internet and the use of social media, has caused some of the focus to shift to mobile devices.

2. METHOD

The methods that will be used in this community service activity are as follows:

1. Identification of participants through coordination with PERMAI Penang, Malaysia facilitated by the coordinator at the university level.
2. Preparation of activities including the division of participants, equipment and activity facilities and administrative documents for the activity.
3. Preparation of making materials according to the theme of the activity to be carried out.
4. Training through presentation of subject matters and simulations on digital media literacy in order to maintain the identity and spirit of nationalism.
5. Interactive discussion or sharing of opinions among training participants facilitated by a facilitator who in this case is the lecturer implementing this community service activity.
6. Evaluation of activities by distributing questionnaires to participants, to find out feedback in order to conduct a situation analysis and as input for organizing similar activities in the future. The next step is to check the data to remove invalid or incomplete responses. Code the answers to open-ended questions to make them easier to analyse. Calculate the average, median, and frequency distribution for quantitative questions.

3. RESULTS

The International Joint Community Service Program, a collaborative effort involving Universitas Mercu Buana (UMB), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), and the Indonesian Community Organization (PERMAI) in Penang, Malaysia, was successfully held from May 3rd to 5th, 2025. The activities were conducted at the An-Nadhoh Foundation in Penang, Malaysia with participation from 24 Indonesian migrant workers residing in the area.

The event followed a structured agenda as set by the organizing committee. The program consisted of the following sessions:

- a. Opening Ceremony
- b. Welcoming Remarks
 1. Mr. Agung Prihatin – Secretary General of PERMAI
In his opening remarks, Mr. Agung expressed sincere gratitude and appreciation for the collaborative initiative between UMB, USM, and PERMAI. He conveyed his hope that this partnership would continue to flourish and bring lasting benefits in the future.
 2. Mr. Dadang Rachmat – Consul General of the Republic of Indonesia in Penang, Malaysia
Mr. Dadang commended the joint community service initiative, highlighting its importance as a form of people-to-people cooperation that contributes significantly to the educational and social development of both nations. He emphasized that the topics addressed during the event were highly relevant to the needs of social institutions and communities and carried substantial current and future value. He noted that knowledge has the power to bring order and positively influence the image of a nation.
 3. Prof. Dr. Andi Adriansyah, M.Eng. – Rector of Universitas Mercu Buana
Prof. Andi emphasized that universities should not remain as ivory towers. He stressed that the Tri Dharma of Higher Education—education and teaching, research and development, and community service—must have tangible impacts beyond academic circles. He advocated for international collaborations as a means of strengthening the role of higher education in solving societal problems. The Rector reaffirmed UMB's commitment to sustaining research and community service programs, particularly those that address the real-life challenges of diaspora communities, including issues of labor, welfare, cultural identity, and societal organization.
 4. TG. Abdul Mutholib – Community Leader and Chairperson of An-Nadhoh Foundation
Mr. Abdul Mutholib emphasized that the collaboration between UMB and the An-Nadhoh Foundation represents a valuable cultural exchange between academics and local community members. He described the Foundation as a self-sufficient institution and highlighted the role of education in nurturing not only intellect but also moral integrity. According to him, educators

should guide individuals to act wisely and ethically, ensuring their contributions benefit rather than harm society. He concluded by encouraging all individuals to live in accordance with divine blessings.

5. Associate Professor Dr. Mohamad Saifudin Mohamad Saleh – Deputy Dean, School of Communication, USM (Research, Innovation and Industry-Community Engagement) Dr. Saifudin elaborated on the broader implications of the international collaboration, referring to it as a form of beneficial cultural assimilation. He defined assimilation as the merging of distinct cultural traits into a new, shared culture. According to him, the prolonged, face-to-face interaction between the local Penang community and Indonesian migrant workers contributes to the emergence of a hybrid cultural identity, enriching both communities.

c. Program Implementation

The main activity was a training workshop titled *“Digital Media Literacy Training for Indonesian Migrant Workers in Penang, Malaysia: Preserving National Identity and Fostering a Spirit of Nationalism.”*

The session began with a presentation delivered by Dr. A. Rahman, M.Si., from the Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Mercu Buana. The presentation covered three major sub-themes:

1. Fostering Nationalism in the Digital Era
 - a. Writing narratives of love and loyalty towards the homeland through respectful language, positive imagery, and appropriate emoticons that reflect well on Indonesia in the eyes of foreign audiences.
 - b. Demonstrating behavior aligned with Indonesian historical and cultural values.
 - c. Upholding honesty and excellence in the workplace, whether toward superiors or peers.
2. Promoting Digital Behavior that Reflects National Values
 - a. Respecting both one’s own cultural heritage and that of the host country.
 - b. Sharing digital content that highlights Indonesia’s rich artistic and cultural heritage.
 - c. Avoiding hate speech and the spread of misinformation that could threaten national unity.
3. Strategies for Strengthening National Identity via Digital Platforms
 - a. Promoting peer education among Indonesian migrant workers on the ethics and responsibilities of using social media wisely.
 - b. Spreading campaigns that showcase Indonesia’s cultural achievements and values.
 - c. Using digital media as a platform to unify Indonesian migrant workers around shared cultural values and identity.

Dr. Rahman concluded by emphasizing that every Indonesian citizen, including those abroad, bears the responsibility of preserving and promoting national identity and a sense of nationalism through their digital behavior. He underscored that safeguarding Indonesia’s image in the digital realm is not solely the government’s responsibility but a shared duty among all citizens, including migrant workers residing overseas.



Figure 1 and 2. Subject Presentation by Speakers



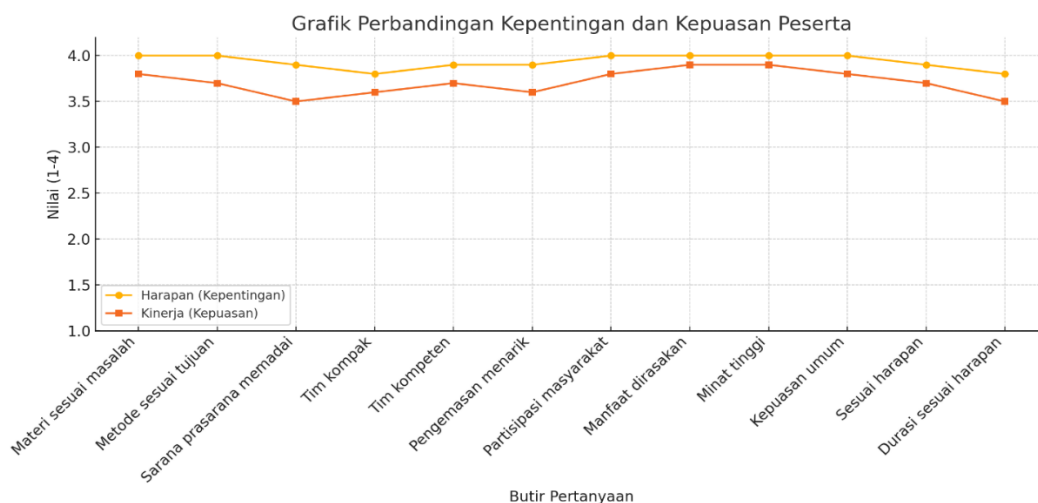
Figure 3. Group Photo with Speakers and Participants

At the end of the session, participants were invited to complete a questionnaire designed to evaluate their level of satisfaction with the community service program. The questionnaire aimed to gather feedback across several key dimensions, including:

1. Relevance of the content to the issues addressed.
2. Appropriateness of the methods in relation to the intended objectives.
3. Adequacy of facilities and logistical support.
4. Cohesiveness and coordination of the organizing team.
5. Competence of the facilitators and organizing personnel.
6. Creativity and engagement in the program's delivery.
7. Level of active participant involvement.
8. Perceived benefits gained from the program.
9. Participants' interest and motivation.
10. Overall satisfaction with the activity.
11. Suitability of the program duration relative to expectations.
12. General participant expectations and suggestions for improvement.

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire responses, the distribution of participant feedback is illustrated in the chart below:

Chart 1. Comparison Chart of Participant Perceived Importance and Satisfaction Levels



The chart above presents a comparison between participants' expectations (importance) and perceived performance (satisfaction) in the community service program conducted by Universitas Mercu Buana in Penang, Malaysia. This chart illustrates the degree of alignment between what participants anticipated and the extent to which those expectations were fulfilled.

4. CONCLUSION

The International Joint Community Service Program held from May 3rd to 5th, 2025, successfully fostered collaboration between Universitas Mercu Buana, Universiti Sains Malaysia, and PERMAI, benefiting Indonesian migrant workers in Penang, Malaysia. The program was conducted in a well-organized manner, highlighted by meaningful contributions from key stakeholders and experts. The opening sessions underscored the importance of cross-cultural cooperation, the social responsibility of higher education institutions, and the integration of local and migrant communities.

The core activity, a digital media literacy workshop, effectively addressed critical themes related to maintaining national identity and cultivating nationalism among migrant workers in the digital age. The training emphasized respectful digital communication, cultural appreciation, and responsible social media use, which are essential in preserving cultural heritage while adapting to a multicultural environment.

Feedback collected through participant surveys revealed high satisfaction levels across various dimensions, including content relevance, delivery methods, facilitator competence, and program logistics. The alignment between participant expectations and actual experiences suggests the program was well-tailored to the community's needs.

Overall, this initiative demonstrated the value of international academic-community partnerships in empowering diaspora populations through education and cultural exchange. It highlights the potential for such collaborative programs to contribute positively to both individual participants and broader social cohesion, thereby reinforcing the critical role of universities in addressing contemporary societal challenges.

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