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Enhancing Information Technology and Professional Communication Competencies for Students of SMKN 3 Maumere in Preparation for Entering the Workforce

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Abstract
The Community Service Program (PkM) at SMK Negeri 3 Maumere aimed to improve students' information technology skills, digital design abilities, professional communication, and job readiness through practice-based training. The program was designed to equip vocational students with relevant digital and soft skills aligned with current workforce needs. Training materials included Microsoft Office, digital design using Canva, video editing with CapCut, public speaking, professional document writing, interview simulations, and the development of digital portfolios. Evaluation results showed a significant improvement in students' competencies following the program. The public speaking training achieved an average questionnaire score of 4.65 out of 5, categorized as "Very Good," indicating a high level of participant satisfaction and skill development. Meanwhile, the Canva and CapCut training obtained an average score of 3.58 out of 4, categorized as "Good to Very Good." Qualitatively, students demonstrated increased confidence, creativity, and technical ability in producing digital curricula vitae, posters, and video portfolios suitable for internships and job applications. Overall, the program was highly relevant to the needs of SMK Negeri 3 Maumere and provided a tangible contribution to strengthening students' digital competencies and vocational job readiness.

Keywords: Digital Competence, Digital Portfolio, IT Skills, Job Readiness, Public Speaking Training

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Introduction
Vocational education plays a strategic role in preparing a workforce that is job-ready and capable of adapting to industrial developments. Vocational High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/SMK) are expected to produce graduates who possess not only technical competencies but also adequate soft skills to enter the modern labor market (Fajri et al., 2025), (Hermans & Neutens, 2024). SMK Negeri 3 Maumere, one of the major vocational schools in Sikka Regency, has made efforts to provide technology-based learning facilities, including computer laboratories. However, preliminary findings indicate that the utilization of these

DOI:
facilities has not been optimal and has not significantly improved students' digital competencies. Initial survey data are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Number of Graduates and Percentage of Employed Students (2021–2024)

Graduation Year	Number of Graduates	Continuing to Higher Education	Choosing to Work	Employed in Line with TKJ Major	Employed Not in Line with TKJ Major	Percentage Not in Line with TKJ Major (of those working)
2021	93	39	54	22	32	59.25%
2022	98	54	44	15	29	65.90%
2023	112	60	52	27	25	48.07%
2024	107	54	53	31	22	42.50%

Source: Primary school data, internal tracer study documentation up to 2024.

Internal tracer study data show that approximately 42–65% of graduates of SMK Negeri 3 Maumere are employed in jobs that are not aligned with their field of study. This condition reflects a fundamental mismatch between students' competencies and current labor market demands, which constitutes the core problem addressed in this study. The mismatch indicates that students have not yet mastered essential competencies required in the workplace, particularly basic digital skills, professional communication abilities, and job readiness skills.

Figure 1. Gestures that should be avoided

This skills gap is evident in students' limited proficiency in Microsoft Office applications, preparation of professional documents, presentation skills, and formal communication (Habibi et al., 2023). As a result, graduates face difficulties in meeting recruitment standards that increasingly emphasize digital literacy and communication competence. Previous studies have confirmed that digital literacy and communication skills are key determinants of job readiness and competitiveness among vocational graduates (Ulfa et al., 2025) and are positively associated with academic performance at the senior secondary level (Ali et al., 2023), (Napitupulu et al., 2025).

Furthermore, limitations in digital competencies are compounded by weak professional communication skills. Many students struggle with public speaking, curriculum vitae (CV) preparation, job application writing, and the development of digital portfolios. Consequently,

DOI:
students often lack self-confidence and mental readiness when transitioning from school to the workplace. This finding is consistent with Endang et al. (2022), who reported that communication skills and self-confidence development remain underemphasized within the Indonesian education system, despite their critical importance in employment contexts (Siswanto et al., 2024).(Thi et al., 2022), (Peralta-roncal et al., 2023),(Peralta-roncal et al., 2023)

In the digital era, creativity and the ability to produce visual content have become integral components of employability. Applications such as Canva and CapCut are widely utilized across creative industries, marketing, education, and office administration (Siswanto et al., 2024); (Fajarini & Turmudi, 2025)), (Tohir et al., 2025) However, students at SMK Negeri 3 Maumere have not received structured and intensive training in graphic design or video editing. As noted by Buyung (Buyung et al., 2025), visual content creation skills represent a critical dimension of digital literacy that is directly aligned with contemporary labor market needs. The absence of such training further widens the gap between educational outcomes and industry expectations.

In addition, students demonstrate low preparedness for digital-based recruitment processes. Limited understanding of professional email communication, interview techniques, digital communication ethics, and career platforms such as LinkedIn constrains students' ability to present themselves effectively to potential employers (Mulia & Utara, 2025). Given that recruitment processes are increasingly conducted through digital platforms, these deficiencies significantly reduce graduates' competitiveness (Tyas Dzawil Istiqomah & Effindi, 2024),(Sosas, 2021),(Popa & Cretu, 2024),(Saraswati et al., 2025)

Despite the availability of adequate facilities, including computer laboratories and internet access, their utilization remains suboptimal. Learning activities tend to focus on fragmented technical instruction, while soft skills development and integrative, practice-based learning are limited. Previous training initiatives have generally addressed hard skills and soft skills separately, resulting in fragmented outcomes and minimal impact on overall job readiness. This practical and academic gap highlights the need for an integrated approach that simultaneously develops digital skills, creativity, and professional communication.

Based on these conditions, this Community Service Program (Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat/PkM) was designed with the explicit objective of enhancing vocational students' job readiness through an integrated, project-based mentoring model that combines IT skills training, (Dedi & Afriadi, 2025), (Sediyono et al., 2024), (Abdullah & Widiaty, 2025)and digital design, professional communication, and workplace simulation. The novelty of this program lies in its holistic integration of hard skills and soft skills within a single, structured framework, rather than treating them as isolated competencies. Through this integrated model, students are guided to produce tangible outputs such as digital CVs, visual portfolios, video presentations, and professional LinkedIn profiles. (Andhika, 2024), (Shodiq et al., 2025)

An analysis of partner conditions was conducted through direct observation, interviews with school management and teachers, and an assessment of facilities and student competencies (Sripan & Lertpongrujikorn, 2025) . The findings confirm that while infrastructure is generally adequate, students' digital competencies, communication skills, and readiness for the digital workforce remain below industry standards. Therefore, this PkM program not only addresses immediate skill deficiencies but also offers a scalable model for strengthening vocational education outcomes in developing regions such as Sikka Regency.

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Method

The Community Service Program (PkM) at SMK Negeri 3 Mau(Dedi & Afriadi, 2025)mere was implemented in accordance with the approved proposal and designed to enhance students' information technology skills, digital design competencies, professional communication abilities, and readiness to enter the digital-based workforce. The implementation adopted a participatory, hands-on, and project-based learning approach, enabling students to actively engage in the learning process and produce outputs relevant to real workplace requirements.

1. **Socialization**

   The socialization stage was conducted at the beginning of the program through direct meetings involving the school principal, homeroom teachers, guidance counselors, and student representatives. This stage aimed to explain the objectives, scope, implementation schedule, and expected outcomes of the PkM activities. In addition, it served to identify students' initial conditions and needs related to IT skills, digital design, professional communication, and job readiness. Feedback from school stakeholders indicated low student motivation, limited mastery of office applications, and insufficient exposure to applied learning, which contributed to graduates' low alignment with their field of study.

2. **Training**

   The training stage constituted the core activity of the program and was conducted in several sessions in the computer laboratory and multimedia classrooms. Training materials included basic IT skills using Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint; digital design using Canva; video editing using CapCut; and professional communication skills, such as public speaking, job interview techniques, and professional document writing. The training emphasized practical exercises and case-based tasks to simulate real workplace situations.

3. **Technology Application**

   Following the training sessions, students were guided to apply the acquired skills through project-based assignments. These activities included developing digital CVs, designing posters and presentation materials, producing short video portfolios, composing professional job application letters and emails, and creating LinkedIn profiles according to professional standards. This stage enabled students to transform theoretical knowledge into tangible outputs that could be directly used for internship and employment purposes.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

   Monitoring and mentoring were conducted continuously throughout the program through direct assistance and small-group consultations. Mentoring focused on addressing technical difficulties, refining students' digital outputs, and providing feedback during simulated job interviews. Evaluation was carried out using formative assessments at the end of each session and summative assessments based on the quality of students' digital CVs and video portfolios. The evaluation results demonstrated significant improvements in students' technical competencies, communication skills, and self-confidence.

5. **Program Sustainability**

   To ensure sustainability, several follow-up measures were prepared, including the handover of training modules to teachers, integration of training materials into extracurricular or supplementary learning activities, and active involvement of teachers in

DOI:

all program stages. Students' digital portfolios were documented for use in internships, industrial work practice (PKL), and job applications. In addition, follow-up visits and continued coordination were planned to monitor progress and provide further mentoring when necessary.(Studies & Demir, 2021). Overall, the five-stage implementation model ensured that the PkM activities were systematic, context-sensitive, and aligned with the real needs of SMK Negeri 3 Maumere, while producing measurable improvements in students' digital competencies and vocational job readiness.

Result and Discussion

Result

The implementation of the Community Service Program (Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat) at SMK Negeri 3 Maumere was carried out in accordance with the stages and plans outlined in the proposal. All activities focused on enhancing students' IT skills, digital design competencies, professional communication, and readiness to enter the digital workforce. The following section presents the results of the program implementation along with the solutions provided for each identified problem area.

1. **Basic IT Skills Aspect**

   Implementation Results

   Training on Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint was conducted in the computer laboratory using demonstration and hands-on practice methods. Students were given the opportunity to work individually at their respective computers to complete exercises that simulated real workplace situations.

   The materials successfully covered included:

   a) Preparation of formal documents (letters, reports, and tables).
   b) Basic data processing using Excel (sum, average, and sorting functions).
   c) Development of professional presentations using PowerPoint.

   Problem Resolution

   The issue of students' low proficiency in office applications was addressed through:

   a) Step-by-step exercises progressing from basic to intermediate levels.
   b) The provision of real-world examples of workplace documents.
   c) Intensive mentoring by university students and the PkM team.

   Observed Improvements

   Students demonstrated noticeable improvements in their ability to prepare work-related documents and presentations. Evaluation results indicated that approximately 80% of students were able to complete the assigned tasks correctly.

2. **Digital Design (Canva) and Video Editing (CapCut) Aspect**

   Implementation Results

   Digital design training was conducted using Canva and delivered in an interactive manner, enabling students to produce visually appealing outputs. The CapCut sessions covered an introduction to basic features, video trimming, text insertion, and background music integration.

   Student Outputs Produced

   a) Digital CVs (PDF format).
   b) Activity posters and personal branding materials.
   c) Visually enhanced presentation slides.
   d) Portfolio videos with a duration of 30–60 seconds.

   Problem Resolution

   Prior to the program, students lacked digital portfolios and had limited understanding of design principles. These issues were successfully addressed through:

DOI:

a) The application of project-based learning approaches.
b) Easy-to-follow live demonstrations.
c) Repetitive practice sessions to reinforce skills.

Observed Improvements

The following images illustrate a selection of students' work produced during the training process (the complete collection is provided in the uploaded video attachment).

Source: PkM Team Documentation

Figure 2. Design Results Created Using Canva

Observed Outcome

Students became more creative, were able to independently develop digital CVs, and successfully produced simple yet appropriate videos suitable for use as professional portfolios.

3. Professional Communication Aspect

Implementation Results

Professional communication training was delivered through classroom sessions and simulations, which included:

1. Public speaking: structured exercises for expressing opinions clearly and systematically.
2. Job interview techniques: interviewer–applicant role-play activities.
3. Communication etiquette: posture, intonation, and the use of formal language.
4. Writing job application letters and professional emails.

Problem Resolution

Issues related to low self-confidence and limited formal communication skills were addressed through:

a) Individual and group speaking exercises, accompanied by immediate feedback following role-play activities.
b) For written communication skills, the use of industry-standard examples of application letters and emails, as well as training students to develop the habit of reviewing references from various companies.

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Observed Improvements

Students gradually demonstrated greater confidence in speaking in front of the class, used more formal and structured language, and were able to perform interview simulations satisfactorily. Signs of increased self-confidence emerged, presentation situations became more relaxed, and students' language use was more organized. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the development of communication competence requires a long-term process, continuous practice, and increased exposure. These skills must be consistently trained and practiced in various contexts to foster strong mental readiness and self-confidence.

5. Readiness for Entering the Digital Workforce Aspect

Implementation Results

This stage constituted a key focus of the program, in which students were guided to produce professional documents and digital identities, including:

a) Finalized digital CVs.
b) Job application letters and application emails.
c) Complete LinkedIn profiles (photo, headline, education, and skills).
d) Portfolio videos (produced using CapCut).
e) Simulations of online job applications using email and Google Drive.

Problem Resolution

The gap between students' competencies and the requirements of the digital labor market was addressed through:

a) Hands-on training in the use of LinkedIn and JobStreet.
b) Job application simulations that closely resembled real recruitment processes.
c) Development of digital portfolios that can be utilized for internships (PKL) or job applications.

Observed Improvements

Students now possess official documents that are ready for use in job applications and have begun to understand strategies for building personal branding in the digital environment. As these skills are still in the developmental stage, students are encouraged to continuously update their competencies and additional skills, while ongoing monitoring is recommended to ensure effective utilization of these digital platforms and features.

Discussion

1. Questionnaire Results After Training

a. Questionnaire Results on Respondents' Assessment of Public Speaking Materials

Following the implementation of the mentoring program, the PkM team distributed a questionnaire to gather respondents' perceptions of students' understanding. The analysis was conducted using a Likert scale, as presented below.

Table 1. Likert Scale Reference for Analysis

Response	Score
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Number of respondents = 23

DOI:

Number of statements (Q1–Q8) = 8 items
Total response items = 23 × 8 = 184 responses

Overall Response Summary
(manual calculation based on 23 × 8 items)
Table 2. Overall Response Summary

Category	Frequency
Strongly Agree (5)	122 responses
Agree (4)	58 responses
Neutral (3)	0
Disagree (2)	2 responses
Strongly Disagree (1)	2 responses
Total	**184**

Number of respondents = 23
Number of statements (Q1–Q8) = 8 items
Total response items = 23 × 8 = 184 responses

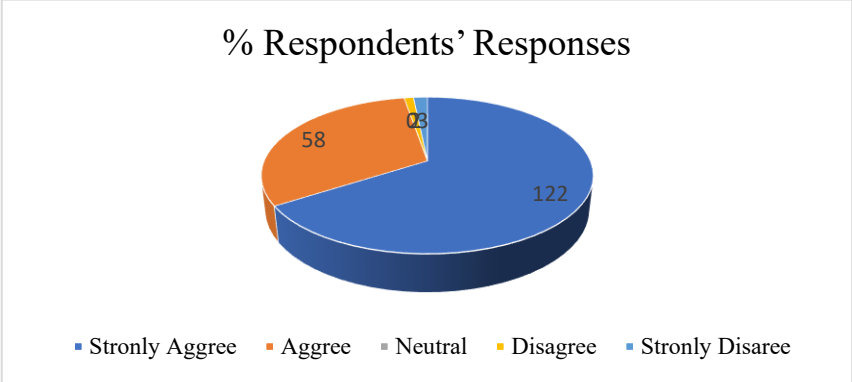

Figure 3. Respondents' Answer Distribution Chart

Overall Mean Score
Calculation:

- 5 × 124 = 620
- 4 × 58 = 232
- 2 × 2 = 4

Total score = 620 + 232 + 4 = 856
Interpretation:

- Maximum score = 5
- Mean score = 4.65

Based on the calculation results, students' responses to the Public Speaking training achieved an average score of 4.65, which falls into the "Very Good" category. The data analysis indicates that participants' satisfaction with the Public Speaking training was categorized as very high. Out of a total of 184 response items, there were 124 "Strongly Agree" responses and 58 "Agree" responses, while "Disagree" responses appeared only

DOI:

twice. No respondents selected "Neutral" or "Strongly Disagree." The overall mean score reached 4.65 on a maximum scale of 5. These findings suggest that the training materials, instructional methods, and facilitator performance were perceived as highly effective in helping students understand the fundamentals of public speaking, increasing their self-confidence, and motivating them to communicate more effectively. Therefore, the training successfully achieved the objectives of the community service program in enhancing students' communication skills.

b. Questionnaire Results on Respondents' Assessment of IT Enrichment Materials (Canva and CapCut)

A summary of the mean scores for each IT-related questionnaire item is presented in the following table.

Table 3. Mean Scores for Each Questionnaire Item

Code	Statement	Mean
IT1	Understanding the basic functions of Canva	3.61
IT2	Ability to use CapCut according to instructions	3.48
IT3	Canva and CapCut help create engaging content	3.57
IT4	Improved skills in using digital technology	3.52
IT5	Steps for using Canva and CapCut were clearly explained	3.61
IT6	Practical examples were relevant and easy to follow	3.57
IT7	Instructor responsiveness in assisting students	3.65
IT8	Materials were easy to understand and relevant to the workplace	3.65

Interpretation

An average score of 3.58 indicates that students fall within the "Good to Very Good" category in terms of IT competency after participating in the Canva and CapCut training.

Distribution of Responses

(Total of 23 respondents × 8 items = 184 responses)

Table 5.4. Percentage Distribution by Category

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	132	71.7%
Agree	48	26.1%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	4	2.2%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Distribution Interpretation

- The training was highly effective, with **72%** of responses categorized as "Strongly Agree."
- Only **2%** of respondents experienced difficulties, primarily related to the use of CapCut.
- No respondents selected "Strongly Disagree."

These data can be visually presented in the following graph.

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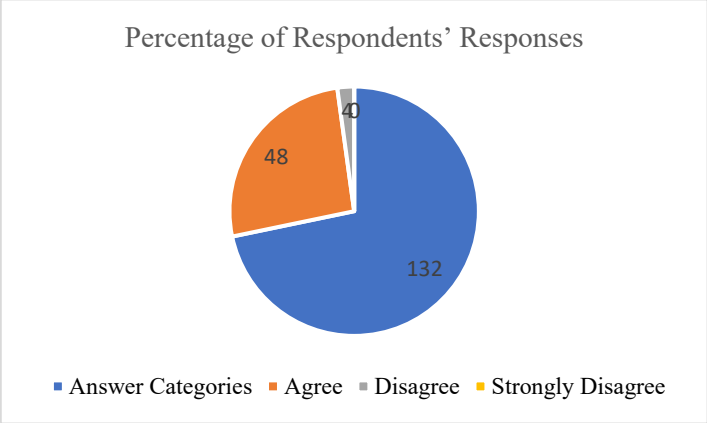

Figure 4. Percentage Distribution of Respondents for Canva and CapCut Materials

2. Analysis of IT Competency Mastery (Canva and CapCut)

Based on the evaluation results of 23 students, the training on the introduction to Canva and CapCut demonstrated a high level of effectiveness. The eight assessment indicators yielded an average score of 3.58 (on a 1–4 scale), which falls within the "Good to Very Good" category. Specifically, students reported that the training was highly helpful in understanding the basic functions of Canva (mean score = 3.61) and that they were able to follow the steps for using CapCut, although with a slightly lower average score (3.48). Students also acknowledged that the training improved their digital technology skills (3.52) and enabled them to produce more engaging digital content (3.57).

Responses toward the instructors were also highly positive. Indicators related to clarity of explanation (3.61), relevance of practical examples (3.57), and instructor responsiveness in assisting students when difficulties arose (3.65) received high scores. These results indicate that the mentoring approach employed was effective in helping students master the core features of Canva and CapCut. Overall, the community service activity aimed at improving IT competency through Canva and CapCut can be considered successful, effective, and highly relevant to students' needs in the digital era. The majority of students perceived the training as very beneficial and aligned with their needs to enhance readiness for entering the workforce.

3. Scientific Discussion That Supports The Research Results

From a scientific perspective, the positive outcomes of this program confirm that practice-based and project-oriented digital training plays a crucial role in strengthening vocational students' competencies. The improvement in Canva and CapCut mastery reflects the effectiveness of experiential learning, where students actively construct knowledge through direct application and repeated practice. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing that digital literacy and creative content production skills significantly enhance employability and job readiness in vocational education contexts. Moreover, the integration of instructor guidance, immediate feedback, and authentic task completion contributes to deeper skill acquisition and sustained learning outcomes. The involvement of teachers throughout the program further supports the sustainability of the intervention, as it enables knowledge transfer and institutional adoption of the training model. Consequently, this integrated mentoring approach not only improves students' technical abilities but also reinforces professional communication and self-confidence, which are essential competencies for successful participation in the digital workforce.

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Conclusion

The implementation of the Community Service Program at SMK Negeri 3 Maumere was carried out effectively and in accordance with the plan outlined in the proposal. Based on the analysis of existing conditions, the mentoring program in IT, digital design, professional communication, and digital job readiness successfully addressed the real needs of both students and teachers as target partners. This program achieved several important outcomes, including significant improvements in students' digital competencies, particularly in the use of Microsoft Office, Canva, and CapCut. These improvements were evidenced by the post-training questionnaire distributed by the PkM team, with results as illustrated in Figure 5.

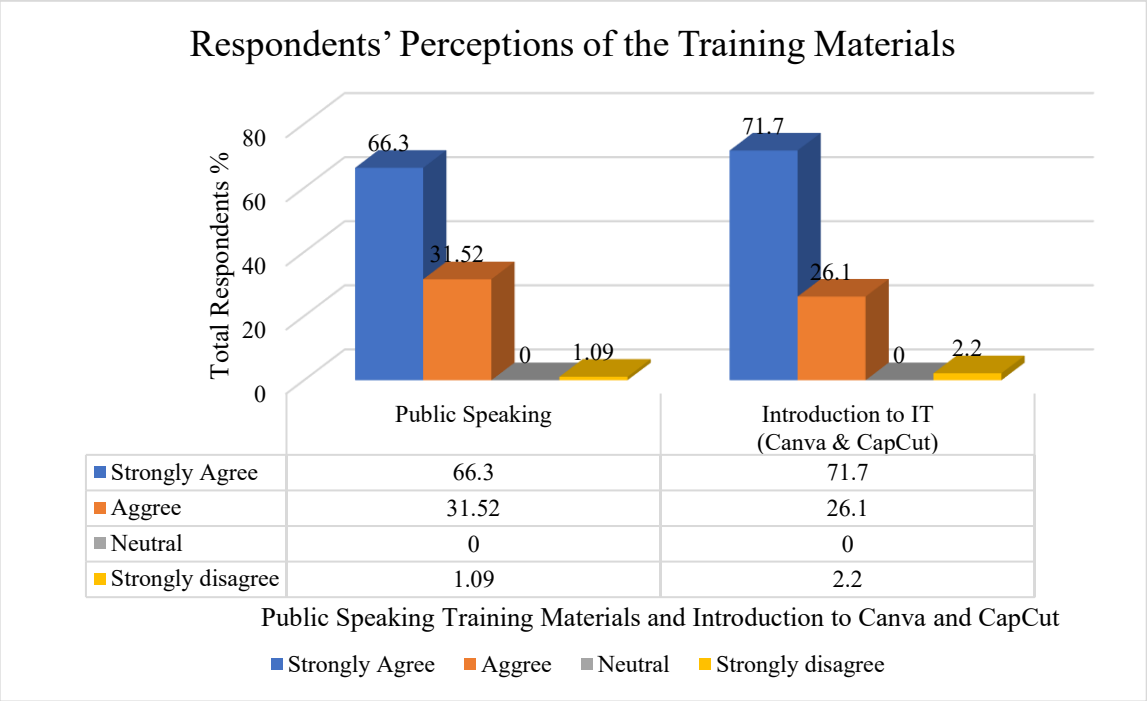

Figure 5. Respondents' Assessment of the Training Materials

The integration of technology-based products into school learning activities was achieved through the provision of training modules, templates, and digital portfolio folders. The program also produced academic outputs, including the preparation of a draft scientific article intended for publication in a nationally accredited journal (SINTA 4). High levels of participation from both students and teachers significantly contributed to the success of the program and opened opportunities for sustainability and further expansion to other departments.

Overall, this Community Service Program generated a positive impact by enhancing students' digital job readiness, strengthening professional communication skills, and supporting the transformation toward technology-based learning at SMK Negeri 3 Maumere.

Limitation and suggestions

Limitations

Despite the positive outcomes achieved, this community service program has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the duration of the program was relatively

DOI:
limited, which constrained the depth of skill mastery among students, particularly for advanced competencies in digital content creation and professional communication. As a result, some students required more time and repeated practice to fully internalize the materials. Second, the variation in students' initial IT competencies posed a challenge during the training process. Differences in prior knowledge and digital literacy levels required differentiated guidance, which could not always be optimally addressed within the available time and resources.

Third, the availability of supporting infrastructure, such as computer specifications, internet connectivity, and software readiness, was not entirely uniform. These technical constraints occasionally affected the smooth implementation of hands-on activities, especially during video editing and online portfolio development.Finally, the evaluation of program outcomes was primarily based on short-term observations and product-based assessments. Long-term impacts, such as graduate employability and sustained use of digital portfolios after graduation, could not be comprehensively measured within the scope of this program.

Recommendations

Based on the identified limitations, several recommendations are proposed for future community service and similar educational intervention programs. First, extending the duration and frequency of training sessions is recommended to allow deeper skill development and more intensive practice, particularly for digital design, video production, and professional communication skills. Second, future programs should consider implementing a preliminary competency mapping or diagnostic assessment to better categorize students based on their initial skill levels. This approach would enable more targeted mentoring strategies and improve learning effectiveness.

Third, strengthening collaboration with the school and external stakeholders, including industry partners and local government institutions, is recommended to enhance resource availability, contextual relevance, and sustainability. Such collaboration could also support internship opportunities and real-world project integration. Fourth, the integration of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with a longer observation period is suggested to assess the long-term impact of the program on students' career readiness and employment outcomes. Overall, addressing these limitations and implementing the proposed recommendations is expected to improve the effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability of future community service programs aimed at enhancing vocational students' readiness for the digital workforce.

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Conflict Of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest in the preparation of this work.

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