

Social media-based consultation for an IT student

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ABSTRACT: The research objective was to solve through consultation the academic and social problems of an IT student. The research was a case study in which the subject was a third-year student having academic and social problems. Social media consultation was used to overcome the problem of communication distance. There were six meetings through social media within two weeks; four meetings in the first week, and two in the second. The consultation was held, so as to identify the problem, analyse the problem, implement a programme to address the problem, and evaluate the programme. The aim was to improve the academic performance and behaviour of the student. In the first week, the student showed decreasing social behavioural and communication problems with a teacher who provided personal attention. In the second week, the student showed the ability to manage his workload with minimal attention from teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The effect of the digital revolution is to drive people towards independent activities and to reduce direct contact between human beings. Also, with the coming of artificial intelligence children are more likely to play by themselves. They communicate and sometimes learn through gadgets or devices. Contact between human beings is important, so as to cultivate and preserve culture. Children learn how to behave in social situations by imitation [1][2]. Some students find games on devices so attractive that they become addicted to them. Some parents see devices as a type of control and means of quietening down their children [3][4].

Devices that are on-line connect people into cyberspace which, with long exposure, can influence behaviour to be the same as that learnt from cyberspace. Learning might happen through imitating the models or acts shown on the device [1]. This behaviour may not be appropriate in the culture of the user and may come from afar [5]. This may create a problem where a person cannot cope with a real situation at home or at work or in study.

The use of multimedia has increased in Indonesian schools. The latest curriculum in 2013 encourages students to browse mostly reading material on the Internet. This keeps students busy working with their devices, tablets or laptops, even for examinations that are computer-based. Hence, students in Indonesia go through their learning years closely engaged with devices. Withdrawal from the devices may cause behavioural problems that others may overlook and leave untreated.

Students may not have a problem if their school encourages students to be independent and to use devices. But what will happen if a student is having problems academically? Their social withdrawal problems may hinder their asking for help from others. Indeed, they may not know how to relate to others since they have withdrawn from social situations. Also, studies show, some students prefer printed materials and face-to-face interaction in learning. Digital sources or e-learning materials may not support deep learning and sometimes drive students to plagiarism or cheating [6][7].

Problems in schools may come from the students, teachers or the programme. Many experts, related to classroom management, found that when teachers create a safe classroom environment, students are motivated to learn, and there is a reduction in behavioural problems, leading to effective learning. Even though many factors contribute to the learning and behaviour of students in schools, many studies show that classroom management is the most important factor [8][9].

A publication by the US Department of Education in 2000 reported that teachers are ill-prepared to deal with behavioural problems in class which, in turn, increases teachers' stress. Disruptive students may reflect a dysfunction in how a school is organised or the staff are trained or how the school is run, i.e. it may relate to the school climate.

Other experts emphasise that, with classroom management techniques and skills, the teacher can create a positive environment in which all students can learn [10][11].

In a case where the person has a normal IQ, he or she will have potential ability and this should guarantee success in learning. But the present ability of a person reflects that person's previous experience. So, when a student with the normal IQ has repeated problems and fails in school, it does not mean they cannot learn or pass. Schools do not find new ways to teach these students and the students do not believe they have ability. The condition may actually relate to students' cognitive and emotional problems. When this situation happens in college, mostly the students take responsibility to overcome their problems. But what happens if students believe they do not have ability? Then, they will accept their failure and give up on the learning challenges. Such students need consultation to help counter their beliefs and to see their potential ability and the psychological barriers they have constructed in their minds [12][13].

Student problems may occur at any level, from K-12 to college. One of the author's students was from the engineering undergraduate programme, but had decided to continue in a psychology programme. In class, the student hesitated to be involved. Later, he came to the author reluctantly, who realised he needed help. In short, the student enrolled in this programme to get help. During the consultation with the author, he poured out his feelings and thoughts about the perceived rejection and neglect of his parents. After graduation, he expressed in public that now he had a good relationship with his parents and said thank you to the author for the consultation. At this point, the author became interested in writing an article related to an IT student whose teacher or instructor referred to the author for consultation.

This student later came in contact with the author. To help this student a consultation was set up. Consultation in the digital era can be done through social media, which helps to overcome the barriers of time and place. Consultation here refers to a triadic session where the consultant (author), consultees (teachers/instructors) and client (student) interact. A (cognitive) behavioural approach was used. Because of some constraints, the consultation through social media was carried out as though the person was in a direct meeting with the consultant. Therefore, this article was written based on the consultation carried out for one IT student. The objective of this research was to resolve the academic and social problems of an IT student by teachers (instructors) through consultation.

METHOD

The research took the form of a case study. The subject was a third-year student with academic and social behaviour problems. A social media consultation was used to overcome the distance problem in communicating with two teachers and to review the student behaviour. There were six meetings through social media within two weeks; four meetings in the first week and two in the second. The consultation was intense and social media helped to overcome the limitations in terms of time and place among the parties involved in the consultation. The consultation followed the steps of a behavioural consultation and consisted of:

- 1) identifying the problem;
- 2) analysing the problem;
- 3) implementing a programme to resolve the problem;
- 4) evaluating the programme.

Through these steps, the consultant helped to improve the academic and social behaviour of the student. While writing this article, there was one direct meeting requested by the student through his teacher mediator. This last meeting during the third week did much to confirm the analysis and results of this study.

RESULTS

The change in the academic and social problems of the student will be described through the steps of the consultation. The behavioural, emotional and mental problems of the student were identified in the results. He felt rejected; had low self-esteem; felt shame; became addicted; suffered withdrawal; and felt fear.

The Problem

The perceived rejection had started several years before, and after he failed in a national examination to graduate from junior high school; that caused him to have low self-esteem. After this, the school counsellor suggested he take an alternative non-formal examination, equal to the junior high school examination. This suggestion was perceived by the student as shameful and something that underestimated him. For him, the examination would not be helpful in continuing his studies. This perceived rejection and low self-esteem influenced his interaction with others, and especially with authorities. Later, he developed withdrawal behavioural symptoms by staying much of the time in his bedroom. He started becoming addicted to smoking. He was sick when he failed the examination. This indicated that the problems were seriously affecting his emotional and bodily health. The perceived rejection had caused him to withdraw and this made it more difficult, emotionally and mentally, for him in his later school life.

Because the problems were not solved, he escaped into another addiction, which was that of playing games. The themes of games are wars and strategies. This type of addiction together with his withdrawal meant he was far from solving his real problems. The more his problems were not solved, the more he became addicted to soothe his emotional pain. At the same time, the school expected him to take more responsibilities in his academic and social life, but he could not. He had repeated the bad results when graduating from senior high school. This made his self-esteem toward school activities even lower.

This low self-esteem reinforced his perceived shame. One day, in college, he raised a question in class because he did not understand something, but when the instructor replied with a question, he was shocked that he could not answer. This for him was perceived as shameful and made him fear the instructor. Later, if he did not understand, he preferred to remain silent out of fear of being shamed by the instructor. This affected his academic and social behaviour in school and college.

His condition became worse. As can be seen from one subject course, he failed and repeated five semesters and still did not pass. Without help he might have dropped out of school, strengthening his perception that people did not want to help him and, in the end, withdrawn into his own world.

Analysing the Problem

As part of the next step, problem analysis, the student reported that he entered the university with a test of English as a foreign language score (TOEFL) of almost 550 and a teaching performance assessment score (TPA) above 600 - similar to the graduate record examinations (GRE) test. The student enrolled in one of the best universities. These two scores indicate he is intelligent enough to continue his education at university. There is no reason he could not learn, because those scores reflected a normal potential ability. His previous performance in schools reflected his actual ability given his circumstances, but not his potential ability.

After discussing potential and actual abilities, he became aware of his ability. This was important as it helped him to understand that his problems were not related to his abilities or intelligence, but rather to the cognitive and emotional problems generated by his previous experience in schools and home. Later, he realised that during his elementary school, he was a happy child, easy to talk to and could make friends. This awareness that he was not an invalid or incapable led him to respond in the consultation and with the teacher (instructor) on how to overcome his problems. This means that the student was ready to learn anew and to change his self-perception.

This stage of consultation generated some concrete problem-solving stratagems for the student, as follows:

- 1) Keep remembering you are intelligent and smart by recalling your good scores in TOEFL and TPA.
- 2) Talk to the instructor that you were so afraid of in the classroom.
- 3) Consult your instructor on progress with your assignment and get feedback.
- 4) Discuss with your classmate, who you know well, your assignment plan in order to raise critical questions and receive evaluation.
- 5) Focus on the progress and process - because the consultation was conducted almost at the end of the semester.

Implementing the Programme

Then, in step 3, programme implementation, these five concrete problem-solving stratagems were invoked by the student in order to help him implement solutions to his problems. This required support from his instructor. The battleground was in the mind of the student in countering the emotions of shame and fear. The student kept repeating in his mind that he can overcome his problems. The biggest challenge was to talk to the instructor whom he had feared.

Evaluating the Programme

Finally, in step 4, evaluating the programme, the student reported that he felt free after talking to the instructor about the course and the class. He said he had to force himself to talk about these. He discussed the assignment with a friend and with his instructor. However, the student needed time to recover and learn the subject, because he might have failed again through limited time available. To encourage the student, the consultant shared a story about the world champion in mathematics who previously failed mathematics in school but decided to learn independently. The student subsequently contacted the consultant to report that he had indeed failed again and will redo the sixth semester, but now with a different perspective.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Several insights and conclusions about the consultation and its effects are:

- 1) The student developed a new appreciation of his abilities. Helping students realise their potential ability will help develop a sense of self-worth. The consultative process can bring a person to question his/her own emotions and

thinking. Are they based on truth and facts or just beliefs? How does he/she feel and think about the problems? Some other questions are how these problems relate to the reality and truths about his/her life [14][15].

- 2) After consultation, the student was not like a child anymore who was angry or shy if not being given an answer but being questioned by an adult. Helping students to recognise their ability and their emotions toward others is important. There are students who lack guidance from parents or teachers, which results in a lack of skills and knowledge. As children these students would have no problems since they expect others to provide for their needs. But, when they grow up without guidance from adults on how to behave and think, they will end up like children expecting others to provide for them. If the needs are not met, they will be angry or feel rejected, which in turn affects their relationship, communication and emotions toward others [12][16][17].
- 3) The student's failure (this time) was not caused by his psychological condition (emotion or other cognitive aspects), but because he had not enough knowledge and skill at that time. Next semester, he will have enough time to improve his knowledge and skills in order to succeed with the assignment. Changing the thinking will, in turn, change the emotions of a person. Positive emotions toward school always relates to achievement, well-being and good behaviour. The positive emotion comes also from how the person perceives the environment. For example, in school, it is important how the classroom is set up, the interaction and communication between students and teachers or instructors, and how the rules of the classroom are established [10][11][18][19].
- 4) Social media help people who are afraid or shy to talk directly face-to-face. People who are reluctant to talk to others or meet others find it easier to talk indirectly and social media, for them, can be an initial step to contacting others. Chatting on social media can uncover a person's emotional makeup and social media provides many ways to express thoughts and emotions without directly meeting others.

The academic and social problems of the IT student were solved through social media-based consultation. The solution involved changing the qualitative value the student ascribed to himself and others. The student now knows he is intelligent and is learning how to improve academically.

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