Factors That Influence the Risk of Chronic Energy Deficiency (CED) in Pregnant Women in the 2nd Tempo in The Working Area of The Jongkong Public Health Center, Kapuas Hulu Regency

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Risk of Chronic Energy Deficiency; Pregnant Women; Jongkong Public Center	This study aims to explore the experiences and challenges faced by students during the Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) regarding managing interpersonal communication to maintain relationships despite physical distance and differing schedules. This study used qualitative methods with a narrative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. The results showed that students experienced a range of complex emotions, such as longing, sadness, anxiety, and frustration. These feelings mainly arise from disrupted communication routines, demanding KKN activities, and limited time for interaction. As a result, their communication patterns shift from emotionally oriented conversations to more functional interactions, primarily conducted through digital platforms such as WhatsApp using text messages and occasional video calls. To maintain relationships, students employ several strategies, including honesty, consistent communication, conflict management, commitment, and mutual understanding. Therefore, maintaining a long-distance relationship during the KKN period requires adaptive communication skills, effective emotional regulation, and an understanding of each partner's limitations. These findings highlight the importance of flexibility and emotional intelligence in maintaining relationships under challenging circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

The *Kuliah Kerja Nyata* (*KKN*) service period requires students to be separated from their families, siblings, and partners (Fathullah et al., 2023). In order for relationships to remain intact, effective, open, and meaningful communication is essential (Fatih et al., 2025; Welch, 2024). Such relationships, particularly those of a long-distance nature, can be strengthened through intentional communication practices (Holtzman et al., 2021; Yuliantoro et al., 2026). This study is grounded in the understanding that students participating in KKN experience various relational dynamics during the program. Therefore, the research investigates these experiences and examines how KKN students maintain their relationships through long-distance communication (Kalandara et al., 2023; Permatasari et al., 2026). The purpose of this study is to describe how students employ interpersonal communication strategies to overcome

physical separation and preserve close and meaningful relationships throughout the community service period (Permatasari et al., 2026).

Interpersonal communication is the process of interaction that takes place directly between two or more individuals, in which a sender conveys messages instantly and the receiver is able to respond immediately in real time (Anca, 2021). Merta (2019) explains that interpersonal communication is communication that occurs face-to-face between two individuals. In this form of communication, there is an exchange of ideas, thoughts, or information between the people involved (Anggraini et al., 2022).

A long-distance relationship (LDR) is a type of romantic relationship in which partners are separated by geographical distance (Fatimah et al., 2025; Goldsmith & Byers, 2020). This relationship tests the depth of longing between the two individuals, who can only maintain contact through social media (Murikkattu et al., 2024). This situation arises for a variety of reasons, such as studying at different universities, working in distant locations, or other factors that result in physical separation. The challenges and opportunities inherent in communicating within long-distance relationships are significant and warrant substantial scholarly attention (Pratiwi & Wijayani, 2023).

Interpersonal communication is defined as direct interaction that occurs between two or more individuals. According to Sakkampang (2024), communication includes everyday conversations, paraphrasing, and brief explanations, and often ends with small talk. It involves both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as the use of various media to maintain close relationships. Through this process, messages can be conveyed and received directly by the intended recipient. In the context of this study, the main focus is to examine how communication influences KKN students who are involved in long-distance relationships (LDR). Maintaining such relationships often presents various challenges, including difficulties in preserving emotional closeness and limitations in both online and face-to-face interactions (Prasetyo & Iftitah, 2025). Furthermore, Creswell (2016) explains that narrative research emphasizes individual stories and is used to explore people's life experiences in depth (Creswell, 2016).

The placement of *KKN* students at locations far from their home institutions results in separation from campus, place of residence, family, partners, and friends. Consequently, interaction and communication during *KKN* are conducted virtually, through voice calls, text messages, and social media platforms. This presents considerable challenges to the interpersonal communication necessary for maintaining relationships. Evidence from numerous studies and field experiences indicates that effective and consistent communication plays a decisive role in sustaining intimacy and relationship satisfaction among couples (Sathyamurthy et al., 2024). Nevertheless, many *KKN* students encounter difficulties in the form of time constraints, scheduling conflicts, and technological barriers that adversely affect the quality of their LDR communication (Lukman & Wijayani, 2023).

Ciledug Kulon Village was chosen as the research location based on several considerations related to the focus of this study. Since the research examines the interpersonal experiences of KKN students who maintain long-distance relationships, Ciledug Kulon was considered representative of the contextual conditions that influence how KKN students experience and manage interpersonal communication within their relationships. Additionally, from a practical standpoint, this location was selected because it provides relatively easy access

to KKN students who can serve as research participants, thereby facilitating the interview and observation processes.

In the study titled "Interpersonal Communication and Long-Distance Relationships: A Narrative Study on KKN Students in Ciledug Kulon Village," the research applies two main theoretical frameworks: Social Penetration Theory proposed and Relationship Maintenance Theory introduced. These theories were chosen because they are relevant for explaining the dynamics of interpersonal communication, especially in understanding how KKN students manage and maintain long-distance relationships. The two theories are applied in a complementary manner, as they collectively explain how *KKN* students use technology and digital communication devices to sustain and intensify their long-distance relationships. Within this framework, students tend to employ open and informative interpersonal communication strategies in order to preserve commitment and intimacy, even in the absence of direct physical interaction. Social Penetration Theory provides insight into the process of emotional disclosure and relational warmth, while Relationship Maintenance Theory describes how relational closeness is actively sustained through consistent effort. Together, these theories form an important foundation for examining the role of interpersonal communication in maintaining long-distance relationships during *KKN*.

This phenomenon deserves academic attention because each student's experience in managing communication and maintaining a long-distance relationship is unique and shaped by personal circumstances and narratives. Some students struggle to maintain emotional closeness, trust, and commitment, while others are able to adapt and grow through the experience. Therefore, this research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of interpersonal communication among students involved in long-distance relationships and to explore the meanings they attach to their experiences as part of their personal journeys. From an academic perspective, this study also contributes to the development of communication studies, particularly in the field of interpersonal communication within the context of long-distance relationships.

Research conducted by Ramdhan et al. (2025) indicates that interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in long-distance relationships. Continuous communication is necessary to maintain harmony and emotional closeness between partners. Their study identified honesty, openness, and communication frequency as key factors that help couples in long-distance relationships maintain mutual understanding despite geographical separation. However, the study did not explore the emotional experiences or subjective meanings individuals derive from being in such relationships. Meanwhile, a study by Pratiwi and Wijayani (2023) examined interpersonal communication strategies among long-distance couples and found that partners primarily rely on social media, video calls, and text-based messaging for communication. Although previous studies have widely discussed the dynamics, strategies, and communication media used in long-distance relationships among students, research that specifically focuses on KKN students as a unique social and emotional context remains limited. In this regard, qualitative research using a narrative approach can help capture the lived experiences and personal strategies of students in facing the challenges of maintaining long-distance relationships during the KKN program.

This study aims to explore the experiences and challenges faced by students during the KKN program, especially regarding managing interpersonal communication to maintain

relationships despite being physically separated and having different schedules. The significance of this study lies in its ability to offer deeper insights into interpersonal communication in specific situational contexts, highlight the role of flexibility and emotional intelligence in maintaining relationships under challenging conditions, and provide practical contributions to the development of interpersonal communication studies in long-distance relationships.

METHOD
Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry method as its primary framework. The qualitative narrative approach encompasses a series of activities including data collection, analysis, and observation of a phenomenon, from which general conclusions can be drawn across individual cases related to the events under examination. The researcher adopted the research title *"Interpersonal Communication and Long-Distance Relationships: A Narrative Study on Real Work College Students in Ciledug Kulon Village"* on the basis that interpersonal communication is considered fundamental to sustaining the quality and continuity of relationships, particularly in long-distance relationships where *KKN* students must undergo a period of community service far from their families, friends, and partners. This context necessitates effective communication skills to preserve emotional bonds and mutual understanding. For these reasons, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate methodological choice for this study.

Types of Research

The study presented here is entitled *"Interpersonal Communication and Long-Distance Relationships: A Narrative Study on Real Work College Students in Ciledug Kulon Village."* This study employed a qualitative design with a narrative inquiry method. It is grounded in the experiences of students communicating within long-distance relationships, some of whom encountered difficulties in managing their emotions and maintaining mutual trust, while others were able to process and draw meaningful lessons from their experiences.

Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research that sharpens its focus on the lived experience of the individual. Researchers adopting this approach seek to understand how a person articulates an experience, wherein that experience is not merely a sequence of events, but is expressed in a way that assigns meaning to those events within the context of one's environment and emotional state. This approach operates on the premise that every narrative offered represents the individual's lived experience of their relationship throughout the *KKN* period. As such, narrative inquiry is not simply a matter of collecting stories, but of uncovering the meaning embedded within those experiences, given that personal experience constitutes a rich source of information. Through this lens, researchers can gain insight into the feelings, emotions, and thought processes of the research participants.

In practice, narrative inquiry is conducted through interviews, personal notes, conversational documents, and the transcription of experiences. The accumulated data are subsequently compiled into a coherent unified narrative that describes the experience as a whole. The researcher then undertakes an interpretive analysis to identify the values, beliefs, or transformations that emerge from the participants' accounts.

Research Location and Time

West Ciledug was chosen as the research location due to the interpersonal experiences of KKN students in maintaining long-distance relationships. Therefore, this location was deemed appropriate and representative for exploring in more depth how KKN students experience and navigate interpersonal communication in maintaining the quality of their relationships. Beyond its relevance to the research topic, the selection of Ciledug Kulon was further supported by the ease of access to the site and the availability of *KKN* students as research subjects, who were relatively accessible for the purposes of interviews and observations.

Research Subject/Informant

The subjects of this study were drawn from a population possessing specific characteristics aligned with the requirements of the research. The purpose of this sampling process was to obtain data in a representative manner that adequately reflects the broader population. In this study, the researcher employed *purposive sampling*, a method in which samples are selected based on predetermined criteria. This approach requires the researcher to be selective in the sampling process, as not all members of the population are eligible to serve as samples, given that the information they possess may be irrelevant or inconsistent with the research problem. The criteria applied in this study required informants to have completed a *KKN* placement, to have been engaged in a long-distance relationship during that period, and to have been willing and able to provide information openly. Based on these criteria, the researcher determined that a sample of three participants was sufficient. This number was considered adequate to represent the population in the analysis and interpretation of the data. Through the use of this targeted sample, the study was able to maintain a specific, in-depth focus that is directly relevant to the research problem.

Data Types and Sources

This study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data were sourced directly from informants by the researcher in order to obtain information aligned with the research objectives. This was accomplished through in-depth interviews with individuals who had direct experience relevant to the topic under investigation, as well as through recorded conversations with partners engaged in long-distance relationships (LDR), to ensure the validity of the data obtained. Secondary data, by contrast, consisted of information previously collected by other individuals or institutions, which the researcher drew upon as a supplementary tool for analyzing the research findings. Such data were gathered through the review of books, academic journals, articles, and research reports pertinent to the topic under discussion, as well as from credible and accountable internet-based sources used to support the research.

Data Collection Techniques

In this study, data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews. This method allowed the researcher to obtain more comprehensive and expansive data throughout the collection process. Data collection was carried out through several sequential steps: identifying informants relevant to the research focus; developing interview guidelines based on the problem formulation and research objectives; conducting interviews by seeking prior consent from participants and ensuring the confidentiality of their identities; recording and documenting significant matters arising during the interview; transcribing the data; and

analyzing it using the designated techniques. This procedure was carried out carefully and systematically to ensure that the data obtained could be considered valid, relevant, and scientifically accountable.

Data Validity Test

Validity testing in research is often narrowly confined to assessments of validity and reliability alone. In qualitative research, ensuring that data are accurate, reliable, and objective requires the use of appropriate and dependable instruments, applied to samples that are representative of the population, followed by the collection and analysis of data using suitable methods. In quantitative research, it is the instruments themselves that are subjected to validity and reliability testing, whereas in qualitative research, it is the data that are directly tested. In this regard, Susan Stainback asserted that quantitative research places greater emphasis on reliability, while qualitative research prioritizes validity. Sugiyono further elaborated that the method of checking data validity refers to the degree of confidence in the research data produced and the extent to which its truthfulness can be substantiated (Diana & Yusro, 2023).

For findings in qualitative studies to be recognized as scientifically credible, it is essential to conduct rigorous data validity testing. The researchers employed several techniques to assess data validity, including triangulation, member checking, audit trails, and peer debriefing. These methods were applied within the qualitative research framework as described by Moleong, Sugiyono, and Nasution.

1. Triangulation

   Triangulation was conducted to confirm that the data collected were accurate and trustworthy by comparing data sources and data collection methods. In this study, the researcher employed two types of triangulations: source triangulation and technical triangulation.

2. Source triangulation

   The researcher compared information provided by several *KKN* students who were engaged in long-distance relationships with their partners. Through this comparative process, the researcher sought to identify whether the experiences reported by the informants shared common patterns, particularly with respect to interpersonal communication during the *KKN* period.

3. Technical triangulation

   The researcher cross-referenced the results obtained from multiple methods, namely in-depth interviews, observations of *KKN* student interactions, and digital messages voluntarily provided by the informants. By comparing the results yielded by these different methods, the researcher aimed to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings. According to Moleong, triangulation is one means of verifying whether data are authentic and trustworthy by comparing them against external sources or alternative forms of evidence. Triangulation therefore serves to ensure that the data collected are both appropriate and dependable.

   a. Member Check

      The purpose of member checking is to evaluate the extent to which the data collected are consistent with what was conveyed by the informant. The function of member checking is therefore to ensure that the data obtained, and subsequently used in writing the research report, accurately reflects the intentions and meanings of the informants.

b. Audit Trail

To allow for the reconstruction of the research process, the researcher maintained an audit trail comprising documentation of all stages of the research, including preliminary steps. During the conduct of the research, the audit trail encompassed field observation notes, interview transcripts, audio recordings, as well as data processing records and coding documentation. The audit trail enables the research process to be reviewed and scrutinised by external parties. According to Moleong, an audit trail is a means of overseeing the research process, allowing the study to be replicated in a systematic and accountable manner.

c. Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing was conducted with individuals who possess expertise in qualitative research methodology and a thorough understanding of interpersonal communication issues. The objective was to identify any inconsistencies in the data, inadequacies in the analysis, and potential errors in the researcher's interpretation of the informants' experiential data. Nasution noted that through dialogue with colleagues, researchers gain alternative perspectives, and new understandings and interpretations emerge that serve to minimise subjectivity in the research process. Through peer debriefing, the researcher obtained fresh viewpoints and reduced the likelihood of subjective bias in the data analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

This study employed a qualitative approach, and accordingly, the data analysis method was descriptive and interpretive in nature. Data obtained through interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a process involving the identification, analysis, and grouping of patterns or themes derived from the interview results. The data analysis procedure was carried out through several sequential stages. First, the data were transcribed verbatim in written form to ensure that no information was omitted and that the content remained consistent with what the informants had communicated. Second, the researcher read and re-examined the complete transcripts in their entirety to understand the context, content, and meanings conveyed by the informants. Third, significant portions of the data were annotated, including notable quotes, statements, and information relevant to the research topic. Fourth, the annotations were grouped into broader themes in accordance with the research questions. Finally, interpretation and conclusions were drawn to identify meanings, patterns, and relationships between themes based on the results of the analysis. This process was carried out iteratively and reflectively to ensure that the meanings derived genuinely represented the perspectives and experiences of the research participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Overview of Research Locations

This study was conducted in Ciledug Kulon Village, situated in Ciledug District, Cirebon Regency, West Java Province. The village is regarded as one of the relatively developed areas in the southern region of Cirebon Regency and is used as a location for the Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) program. Ciledug Kulon is characterized by an active community life, favorable geographical conditions, and well-established community organizations. The selection of Ciledug Kulon Village as the research setting was based on several considerations related to the focus of the study, particularly the interpersonal experiences of KKN students who maintain long-distance relationships. For this reason, the village was considered an appropriate and representative location to examine how KKN students experience and manage interpersonal communication in order to sustain the quality of their relationships. Additionally, practical factors also influenced the choice of this location, including easier access to KKN students who could serve as research participants, which facilitated the process of conducting interviews and observations.

Geographical Conditions of Ciledug Kulon Village

Ciledug Kulon Village is located in the southern part of Cirebon Regency and borders Ciledug Lor Village to the north, Jatiseeng Village to the south, Ciledug Wetan Village to the east, and Bojong Village to the west. The village area consists of residential areas, rice fields, and a small portion of private land. The fertile soil conditions make agriculture the primary source of livelihood for the local community. The village has two main seasons: the rainy season from October to March and the dry season from April to September. In terms of accessibility, the village is quite easy to reach because it is located near the main district road. The availability of public transportation and private vehicles facilitates mobility for residents, KKN students, and researchers, making the process of conducting interviews and data collection more comfortable.

Social Conditions of the Community

The community of Ciledug Kulon Village is characterized by strong social interaction and a high sense of mutual assistance. In their daily lives, residents maintain harmony through cooperation and support among community members. Several social activities regularly carried out in the village include:

1. Mutual cooperation and community service activities aimed at maintaining environmental cleanliness and improving public facilities.
2. Weekly religious gatherings or recitations attended by many residents, particularly women.
3. Youth organization activities that involve sports, arts, and support for various community programs.
4. Regular meetings among RT and RW leaders to discuss environmental conditions and community development.
5. Activities organized by PKK and the Integrated Health Post (Posyandu), which focus on health initiatives and family economic empowerment involving women.

The villagers possess diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from elementary school graduates to university alumni. This diversity contributes to a balanced yet dynamic social environment. In terms of occupation, most residents work as farmers and agricultural laborers,

while others are small traders, craftsmen, home-based workers, and a small proportion are employees in nearby urban areas. The presence of KKN students in the village is generally well received by the community. They are frequently involved in various educational, social, and development activities. The strong interaction between students and local residents creates a supportive social environment, which is particularly beneficial for research related to interpersonal communication.

Findings by Theme

a. Theme 1: Feelings of *KKN* students who establish long-distance relationships.

Dena expressed feelings of sadness because she had to be separated from her partner and lost the sense of togetherness they previously shared. She explained that many activities they usually did together suddenly changed when KKN began, which became a challenge for her. Putri experienced feelings of anger and sadness, particularly because communication with her partner became limited due to their respective busy schedules. This situation led to increasing conflicts that eventually resulted in their separation. Meanwhile, Salsa stated that although she was already accustomed to being in a long-distance relationship, the early phase of KKN still felt difficult because she missed her partner and lost their routine of close communication, such as nightly video calls. Overall, the transition from daily routines to the KKN environment affected the emotional stability of students in long-distance relationships, with feelings of sadness, frustration, and loss emerging as dominant emotions during the initial phase.

b. Theme 2: Changes in Communication Patterns During *KKN*

Each informant experienced changes in their communication patterns during the KKN period. Dena communicated less frequently with her partner and relied mainly on WhatsApp messages, without engaging in video calls. Her busy schedule made it difficult to allocate time for more meaningful or in-depth conversations. Putri experienced significant changes as well; both she and her partner often took a long time to respond to messages, sometimes between one and ten hours due to their respective activities. This delay in communication created feelings of frustration and contributed to increasing conflicts. Meanwhile, Salsa continued to communicate with her partner on a daily basis, primarily through WhatsApp and Instagram. However, the intensity of their communication became more limited because of differences between the schedule of KKN activities and her partner's working hours. Overall, the findings indicate that the shift in communication dynamics was reflected not only in the frequency of interaction but also in the quality of communication. The demanding schedule of KKN activities made communication more functional focused mainly on exchanging information rather than the more emotional and in-depth interactions that existed previously.

c. Theme 3: Challenges and Obstacles in Relationships

During the KKN period, the informants encountered several challenges that affected the stability of their relationships. Dena, in particular, experienced difficulties due to limited interaction and lack of time caused by the demanding KKN schedule. She felt that communication became more difficult, which often led to misunderstandings. Putri faced pressure arising from differences in schedules, the need to maintain communication, and her partner's suspicions regarding the KKN environment. These issues gradually weakened their relationship and significantly reduced its quality. Meanwhile, Salsa explained that the main challenges she experienced were limited time, communication difficulties, and physical fatigue

from daily activities. This situation also made emotions more unstable and communication harder to maintain consistently.

d. Theme 4: Time Management and Communication Strategy

Despite facing various challenges, each informant developed their own strategy to cope with the situation. Dena chose not to establish a fixed communication schedule and preferred to interact only when there was available free time. Both she and her partner tried to understand each other's busy schedules. Putri, on the other hand, usually communicated in the morning or during short breaks between activities. Although responses from her partner were sometimes delayed, she still attempted to provide updates at the beginning of the day. Meanwhile, Salsa adopted a more open approach by explaining her KKN situation to her partner, allowing them to better understand the limitations of her time. These findings indicate that communication strategies during this period tend to be adaptive. Rather than maintaining a strict routine, students generally adjust their communication according to available time and their partner's circumstances.

e. Theme 5: Conflict Management and Misunderstandings

When facing conflict, Dena prefers to resolve problems through direct, face-to-face communication because she believes that messages can easily lead to misunderstandings. Putri, on the other hand, tends to address conflicts by sending detailed messages or explaining the situation through phone calls after returning to her boarding house. She usually provides explanations when there are delays in responding in order to prevent more serious disputes. Meanwhile, Salsa generally chooses to discuss problems via phone calls, although at times she also reacts emotionally, such as temporarily blocking her partner when her emotions become overwhelming.

f. Theme 6: Emotional Openness

The level of emotional openness among the informants varied. Dena demonstrated a high degree of openness and consistently expressed her feelings without hesitation. Putri was also relatively open but sometimes restrained her emotions if her partner responded negatively or appeared emotionally unstable. Salsa also showed openness but tended to regulate her emotions when her partner was tired or not in a stable emotional state. She preferred to wait for an appropriate moment to communicate so that the situation would not worsen. These findings suggest that emotional openness is influenced by the condition of the relationship and the partner's response; positive responses from partners tend to encourage greater openness.

g. Theme 7: Valuable Lessons from *KKN* and LDR

The three informants reported gaining valuable lessons from their experiences. Dena learned the importance of patience and realized that direct interaction is often more effective than communication through messages alone. Putri developed a better understanding of time management and recognized that relationships require mutual understanding and empathy toward each other's busy schedules. Salsa emphasized the importance of honesty, mutual understanding, and the ability to adapt to a partner's activities and time constraints. Overall, experiencing a long-distance relationship during KKN provided students with important lessons in managing emotions, communicating effectively, and understanding the circumstances and needs of their partners.

Interpretation of Findings Based on Theory

This analysis is based on two main theoretical frameworks: Social Penetration Theory developed by Altman and Taylor, and Relationship Maintenance Theory proposed by Stafford and Canary. This section presents a comprehensive interpretation of the research findings obtained from interviews with three informants: Dena, Putri, and Salsa. The purpose of this analysis is to explore the relationship between the emotional experiences of KKN students and how they manage communication when maintaining long-distance relationships.

Interpretation Based on Social Penetration Theory

Social Penetration Theory explains that interpersonal relationships develop gradually, moving from surface-level interactions toward deeper levels through the process of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure involves sharing personal information, emotions, and feelings with others. This process tends to develop effectively when communication occurs consistently and when psychological conditions support the formation of close relationships. In the context of KKN students, this theory helps explain the emergence of negative emotions such as longing, reduced emotional closeness, anxiety, and even conflict that may arise when individuals attempt to maintain long-distance relationships.

a. Decreased Communication Intensity and Barriers to Self-Disclosure

The findings indicate that the demanding schedule of KKN activities reduces communication between students and their partners, both in terms of frequency and duration. This situation directly limits the process of self-disclosure, which plays an important role in strengthening interpersonal relationships. Dena explained:

"It was really difficult… there was rarely time to communicate with my partner for almost a month" (Interview, November 24, 2025).

Salsa expressed a similar experience:

"Our schedules never match… when he is free I am doing KKN activities, and when I am free he is working" (Interview, November 24, 2025).

These statements illustrate a significant mismatch in schedules between both partners. From a theoretical perspective, this condition reduces opportunities for communication that would normally allow relationships to develop into deeper levels, resulting in a decline in relational intimacy. Social Penetration Theory explains that relationships deepen as individuals share increasingly personal information. When communication intensity decreases, the ability of couples to maintain the depth of their relationship also weakens, which may lead to various emotional responses experienced by the informants.

b. The Impact of Barriers to Self-Disclosure on Emotions: Longing, Anxiety, and Insecurity

Limited opportunities to share experiences and feelings often lead to the emergence of negative emotions such as longing, anxiety, disappointment, and insecurity. Putri described this situation clearly during the interview, explaining that communication during KKN often led to misunderstandings and feelings of doubt. The tendency to suspect or question a partner reflects disruptions in both the breadth and depth of communication topics. Within the framework of Social Penetration Theory, this condition can be interpreted as relationship regression, a situation in which the relationship either stagnates or retreats to a more superficial level. As a result, students

may experience emotional emptiness because the space needed to maintain intimacy becomes limited.

c. Variations in Self-Disclosure Strategies: Spontaneous, Selective, and Situational

The findings also show that each informant adopts a different approach to self-disclosure. Dena tends to communicate openly and spontaneously, explaining that she usually shares her experiences immediately. Salsa, however, is more cautious and considers her partner's emotional condition before expressing her feelings. For instance, she prefers to delay sharing certain issues when her partner appears tired or emotionally unstable. Putri also adjusts her communication style depending on how her partner responds. These differences demonstrate that self-disclosure strategies can change depending on relational circumstances. In Social Penetration Theory, the ability to regulate how much personal information is shared is referred to as boundary management. The three informants illustrated how these boundaries were managed differently during the KKN period.

d. Conclusion of Social Penetration Theory

Overall, the interpretation based on Social Penetration Theory suggests that:

1. Limited communication during the KKN program restricts the process of developing deeper relational intimacy.
2. These limitations can trigger negative emotions such as longing, anxiety, and insecurity.
3. Despite these challenges, students continue to practice self-disclosure, although in a more cautious and limited manner compared to before the KKN program.

Thus, Social Penetration Theory helps explain how emotional changes and relational dynamics occur in long-distance relationships, particularly among students participating in the KKN program.

Interpretation Based on Relationship Maintenance Theory

Relationship Maintenance Theory, proposed by Stafford and Canary, explains that relationships can remain stable when partners apply certain strategies, such as positivity, openness, assurance, shared responsibilities, and social networking. In this study, the strategies most relevant to the participants' experiences include openness, communication routines, conflict management, and commitment.

a. Openness: A Strategy to Maintain Emotional Closeness

Openness emerged as one of the primary strategies used by the students. Sharing personal experiences and feelings became a way to compensate for the absence of physical interaction by strengthening emotional intimacy. Putri explained that she usually shares stories about her daily activities during KKN, although she sometimes waits for the right moment if her partner appears less responsive. This indicates that openness involves not only the content of communication but also the timing and manner in which messages are delivered. Such awareness reflects an important skill in sustaining long-distance relationships.

b. Assurance: Strengthening Confidence in Long-Term Commitment

Assurance refers to expressions of trust and commitment within a relationship. This aspect can be seen in the willingness of partners to understand each other's situations and avoid demanding more than what the other person can reasonably provide. Salsa explained that both she and her partner recognize each other's responsibilities, she understands his work commitments while he understands her KKN activities. This mutual understanding fosters a sense of security and helps reduce anxiety caused by physical and emotional distance.

c. Positivity: Maintaining a Supportive Communication Climate

Another strategy used to maintain relationships is positivity, which involves keeping communication constructive and avoiding interactions that might escalate conflict. For example, Dena prefers not to resolve disagreements through text messages because she believes written communication can easily lead to misunderstandings. Instead, she chooses to discuss problems directly. This approach reflects an effort to maintain a positive communication tone and prevent unnecessary conflicts. Positivity helps preserve warmth in the relationship even when distance and busy schedules limit interaction.

d. Sharing Tasks: Dividing Responsibility for Maintaining Communication

Although the partners do not live in the same place, they still share responsibility for maintaining the relationship, particularly in managing communication routines. Putri described how she attempts to maintain regular contact by sending messages at certain times, such as early in the morning and again later in the day. Establishing such routines helps maintain connection despite differences in daily activities. In this sense, shared tasks are not limited to physical responsibilities but also include efforts to organize and sustain communication patterns.

e. Conflict Management: Adjusting Communication in Sensitive Situations

Each informant also demonstrated different approaches to managing conflict. Dena prefers resolving issues through direct communication to avoid misinterpretation. Putri typically waits until she returns to her boarding house to explain the situation more clearly. Meanwhile, Salsa combines several communication methods, including messaging, phone calls, and non-verbal cues. These variations show that students adopt flexible strategies tailored to the situation and the importance of the issue being discussed.

f. Theoretical Conclusions on Relationship Maintenance

Based on the findings, Relationship Maintenance Theory helps explain several important points:

1. Despite experiencing emotional pressure, the students actively attempt to sustain their relationships through various communication strategies.
2. Openness, commitment, communication routines, and effective conflict management play crucial roles in maintaining relationship stability.
3. These strategies help minimize the negative effects of the self-disclosure barriers explained in Social Penetration Theory.

Synthesis of the Two Theories: Emotions, Barriers, and Strategies

When Social Penetration Theory and Relationship Maintenance Theory are considered together, a more comprehensive understanding emerges. Social Penetration Theory explains why negative emotions arise when emotional closeness decreases due to limited communication. Meanwhile, Relationship Maintenance Theory clarifies how individuals respond to these challenges by employing interpersonal communication strategies to sustain their relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study on the experiences of *KKN* students in long-distance relationships (LDR) reveals three principal findings. First, students experience complex emotional burdens during the *KKN* period, characterized predominantly by sadness, anxiety, longing, and confusion, which are intensified by physical separation, disrupted routines, and the demands of fieldwork, with even experienced LDR students reporting heightened emotional strain particularly during the early weeks of adjustment. Second, interpersonal communication patterns undergo significant transformation, shifting from frequent and emotionally driven exchanges to more functional, situational interactions conducted primarily through WhatsApp, encompassing text messages and occasional video calls; this decline in communication intensity contributes to reduced quality, misunderstandings, and in some cases relationship dissolution. Third, students employ a range of strategies to sustain their relationships, including honesty, mutual understanding, direct conflict resolution through extended calls or messages, and deliberate time management of communication schedules, reflecting the considerable adaptability required to maintain relational bonds under the pressures of *KKN*. For future research, it is recommended that studies expand the participant sample across multiple *KKN* locations to enhance generalizability, and explore the perspectives of both partners in the relationship simultaneously, as the present study is limited to the experiences of the *KKN* students themselves. Longitudinal approaches tracking relational outcomes beyond the *KKN* period would also yield valuable insight into the long-term effects of LDR communication on relationship quality and stability.

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