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The Differences in Interpersonal Competences of Junior and Medior Sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St. Charles Borromeus, in the Indonesian Province

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Abstract: This research uses a comparative quantitative method with the aim to: 1) To find out whether there is a difference in the interpersonal competence of junior and medior sisters in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Carolus Borromeus 2) To measure how high the level of interpersonal competence of Junior Sisters is 3) To measure how high the level of interpersonal competence of Medior Sisters is 4) To identify items in the interpersonal competence scale that are detected as not optimal or low that can be proposed as coaching topics. The subjects of this study were sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Carolus Borromeus Province of Indonesia, involving 149 respondents consisting of 70 Junior Sisters and 79 Medior Sisters. This study used an interpersonal competence scale consisting of 54 used items with 5 aspects, namely: 1) Empathy; 2) Communication skills; 3) Social integration; 4) Relationship satisfaction; 5) Relationship conflict. This scale has good reliability with an Alpha Cronbach reliability index of 0.935. Assumption testing found the data to be non-normally distributed and inhomogeneous. Because the assumption test was not met, the Mann whitney non-parametric t-test was used. The results of this study are: 1) Interpersonal Competence of Medior Sisters (mean: 188.380) is higher than Junior Sisters (mean: 179.243) with $p < 0.001$. 2) Interpersonal competence of junior sisters tends to be very high (59%); 3) Competence of mid-level sisters tends to be very high (67%); 4) There are 4 items (30,32,36,53) with the lowest scores that fall into the medium category that are given proposed coaching topics.

Keywords: Interpersonal competence, Junior and Medior Sisters, Congregation of CB Sisters

INTRODUCTION

Humans as social beings need interpersonal competence in building relationships and socialising. Interpersonal competence refers to an individual's ability to interact and communicate with other individuals. Interpersonal competence according to Allemand et al. (2015) is defined as a person's ability to interact socially with others, including communication skills, social integration, relationship satisfaction, and the ability to manage conflict. This competence is closely related to empathy, which allows a person to understand and share the feelings of others and build cooperative and satisfying relationships (Farber, 1962).Interpersonal competence is a very valuable asset for every individual. Interpersonal competence is essential because of its fundamental role in establishing, maintaining and developing healthy social relationships (Buhrmester *et al*., 1988). Interpersonal competence is a core ability that enables individuals to build and maintain effective social relationships through communication, empathy, and conflict management (Allemand *et al*., 2015; Farber, 1962; Buhrmester *et al*., 1988). As a fundamental determinant of social functioning, this competence plays a crucial role in ensuring harmonious interactions within social and communal

settings. Therefore, understanding variations in interpersonal competence becomes important, particularly in structured communities where relational dynamics are central to daily life.

Living together in a religious community requires qualified interpersonal skills to create harmony and good co-operation among its members (Suparno, 2011). The challenge of interpersonal competence also arises in the cooperative relationship between religious and laity. Cooperation between monks and lay people is often faced with complex challenges, especially in terms of interpersonal competence. As described by Suparno (2011), authoritarian attitudes in leading, such as self-righteousness and dominating decisions, indicate low interpersonal skills, especially in terms of empathy, communication, and respect for other people's ideas. From the results of interview data collected by researchers, the obstacle to interpersonal competence is the problem of communication skills that are not yet optimal. The most prominent problem is the lack of communication skills of each person, which causes conflicts with fellow sisters, partners and those served.

All these problems indicate that the development of interpersonal competence is an urgent need to improve the quality of cooperation in religious communities. These competencies include the skills of listening, respecting, adapting and finding joint solutions to overcome various challenges in interpersonal relationships. With better skills, the cooperation between monks and laity can become more productive and inspiring for the wider community (CB Sisters, 1999).

To find out the problems related to interpersonal competence experienced by Junior Sisters and Medior Sisters, the researcher conducted interviews with five CB Sister respondents. From the results of the interview data that has been collected by the researcher, the obstacle to interpersonal competence is the problem of communication skills that are not yet optimal. Communication is hampered by assumptions and prejudices created by each person. The sisters are also less able to convey feelings and thoughts well between each other because of bad taste and tend to keep it to themselves. The most prominent problem is the lack of communication skills of each person, which leads to conflicts with fellow sisters, partners and those served.

According to Buhrmester et al. (1988), high interpersonal competence is caused by several main factors. Extensive social experience, through frequent and diverse social interactions, gives individuals the opportunity to hone interpersonal skills. High self-confidence allows a person to cope better with social situations, thereby establishing and maintaining relationships. Active listening skills, i.e. listening with empathy and responding accordingly, are key to success in interpersonal relationships. Good emotion regulation also plays an important role, as it helps individuals manage emotions wisely when facing conflicts or challenges (Maria, 2007). In addition, effective communication skills, including the ability to convey thoughts, feelings and needs clearly, are a major factor in building healthy relationships.

The religious life experience plays an important role in shaping the interpersonal competence of a religious (Pedhu, 2022). Junior sisters who are new to religious life often face challenges in adjusting to a new lifestyle and community. At this stage, they tend to experience tension in living the religious vows, spiritual learning, and building relationships with fellow community members as well as building relationships with the individuals they serve (Suster CB, 1999). While the long-time religious Sister Medior has the advantage of years of experience and learning, she has the advantage of being able to recognise and recognise her own needs.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with a comparative design. It aims to examine differences in interpersonal competence between Junior Sisters and Medior Sisters in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo. Through this comparison, the study seeks to identify variations in interpersonal competence between the two groups.

The research was conducted in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeus in accordance with the community where the sisters live in the area of Indonesia and Timor Leste online. The research was conducted on 3 March 2025-9 March 2025 and was conducted online using psychological scales on the google form application. The subjects in this study were Nuns from the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Carolus Borromeus of the Indonesian Province in the junior and medior categories. This research applies purposive sampling, a method that is applied in accordance with the specific objectives to be achieved. The samples involved in this study were Junior Sisters and Medior Sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Charles Borromeo, with the following criteria: 1) Junior Sisters in the first year after taking temporary vows until the seventh year and up to two years after perpetual vows.2) Medior Sisters starting two years after perpetual vows until the age of thirty years of religious life. This study took a sample of 149 respondents consisting of 70 Junior Sisters and 79 Medior Sisters.

RESULTS

Validity is ensured by passing the examination of the supervisor (professional judgement) so that the items made are in line with the theoretical construct of the measuring instrument used. Based on the validity results that have been carried out with the supervisor, there are 60 items on the interpersonal competence scale. This scale has good reliability with an Alpha Cronbach reliability index of 0.935. Assumption testing gets data that is not normally distributed and is not homogeneous. Because the assumption test was not met, the Mann whitney non-parametric U test was used because the data were not normally distributed and not homogeneous.

After going through validity and reliability tests, it was determined that 54 items from the scale were used in this grouping process. Data can be said to be normal if the ρ value ≥

0.05. Referring to the table below, it can be concluded that the data of the Medior Sister and Junior Sister respondents showed an abnormal distribution ($\rho < 0.001$).

Table 1. Mean Difference in Interpersonal Competence

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
Interpersonal Competence	Medior	79	188.380	15.681	1.764
	Junior	70	179.243	12.122	1.449

Based on the processed data, the average interpersonal competence of Junior Sisters is higher than that of Junior Sisters ($\rho < 0.001$). This result was obtained through a non-parametric Independent T-Test test (Mann Whitney) which showed a significance value of $\rho < 0.001$, smaller than 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is a difference in interpersonal competence, where Medior Sisters have higher competence than Junior Sisters, can be accepted.

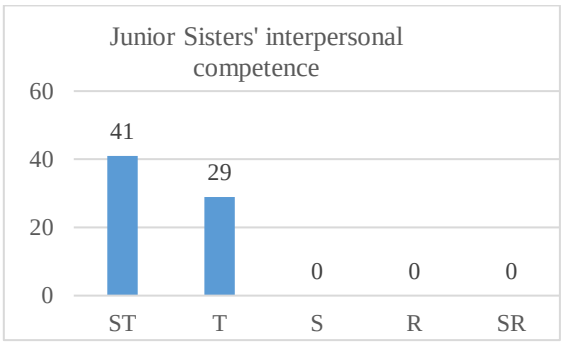


Figure 1. Interpersonal Competence Graph of Junior Sisters

Referring to the data in the tables and graphs that have been presented, it can be seen that: 1) There are 41 (59%) Junior Sisters who have very high interpersonal competence. 2) There are 29 (41%) Junior Sisters who have a high level of interpersonal competence.3) There are 0 (0%) Junior Sisters who have a medium level of interpersonal competence. 4) There are 0 (0%) Junior Sisters who have a low level of interpersonal competence. 5) There are 0 (0%) Junior Sisters who have a very low level of interpersonal competence.

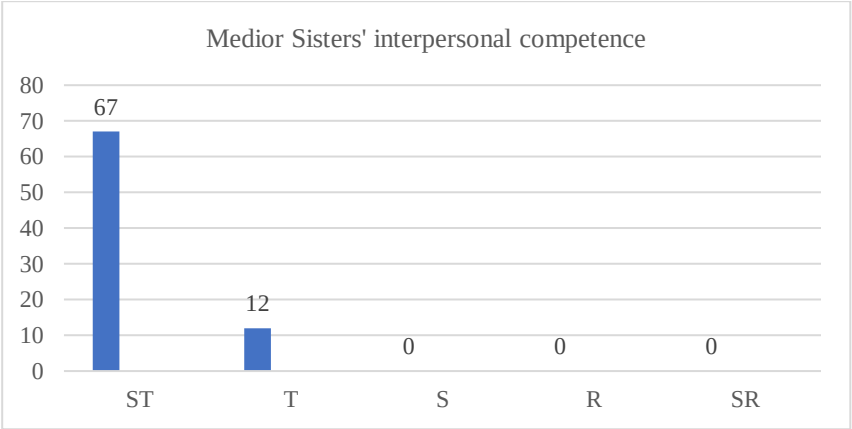


Figure 2. Graph of Interpersonal Competence of Medior Sisters

Referring to the data in the tables and graphs that have been presented, it can be seen that: 1) There are 67 (85%) Medior Sisters who have very high interpersonal competence. 2) There are 12 (15%) Medior Sisters who have a high level of interpersonal competence. 3) There are 0 (0%) Sister Mediors who have a medium level of interpersonal competence. 4) There are 0 (0%) Sister Mediors who have a low level of interpersonal competence. 5) There are 0 (0%) Sister Mediors who have a very low level of interpersonal competence.

From the data displayed in the table above, it can be seen that: 1) There are 12 (22%) statement items in the very high category. 2) There are 38 (70%) statement items in the high category3) There are 4 (7%) statement items in the medium category.4) There are no statement items in the low category.5) There are no statement items in the very low category.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the test conducted by the researcher, it was found that there was a significant difference in interpersonal competence between Junior Sisters and medior Sisters. From the data that has been processed both samples show different mean values. Junior Sister with mean = 179.243 and Medior Sister with mean = 188.380. The t-test shows the value of $\rho < 0.001$, meaning that the t-test is fulfilled because the value of $\rho < 0.05$. Thus it can be stated that the hypothesis of this study is accepted and proven by the difference in differences in interpersonal competence, where the Medior Sisters have higher competence than the Junior Sisters.

Junior Sisters have not undergone much formation to develop interpersonal competence, considering that the Junior period is the initial stage when Sisters begin to enter the Congregation. According to the syllabus of Sister formation (CB Sisters, 2012), the Junior Sisters are developing the spirit of corporatness and sense of belonging to the CB Congregation. They enter the process of integration of religious life in community life, prayer life, and apostolic ministry according to the spirit of life of the CB Congregation. The term of the Junior Sister is 5 to 7 years, during which time the Junior Sister is expected to always try to know herself in her relationship with God and her fellow sisters in the community as mentioned in the Constitutions and the Directorium (CB Sisters, 1989).

Sister Medior has undergone a lot of formation to develop her interpersonal competence. The age of religious life of Sister Medior is 2 years after final vows up to 30 years. Throughout the process of personal and collective formation in the Congregation, Sister Medior is increasingly expected to internalize the spirituality of the Congregation, be more involved and responsible in the apostolic work in the midst of the church and society (Suster CB, 2012). At this time, the Medior Sisters have been given many responsibilities in the survival of the Congregation and they are at the

peak of their career. Sister Mediors are at the peak of contribution and involvement in apostolic work (Santrock, 2019).

Based on the research results presented in figure 1, it can be seen that there are 41 (59%) Junior Sisters who have a very high level of interpersonal competence, 29 (41%) Junior Sisters who have a high level of interpersonal competence, 0 (0%) Junior Sisters who have a moderate level of interpersonal competence, 0 (0%) Junior Sisters who have a low level of interpersonal competence, 0 (0%) Junior Sisters who have a very low level of interpersonal competence. The mean result on interpersonal competence in Junior Sisters is 179.243.

Based on the data, the interpersonal competence of Junior Sisters can be categorized as high to very high, as the majority of respondents fall within these categories. This indicates that Junior Sisters generally demonstrate a strong level of interpersonal competence, despite their relatively shorter experience in religious life. However, when compared to Medior Sisters, their mean score remains lower, suggesting that length of experience may contribute to more developed interpersonal competence among Medior Sisters.

In contrast, the results presented in figure 1 show that the majority of Medior Sisters fall into the very high category, indicating a consistently strong level of interpersonal competence within this group. This pattern reinforces the assumption that longer formation and experience in religious life are associated with higher interpersonal competence.

Based on the data that has been obtained and listed above tends to be high. Medior Sisters in membership as CB Sisters fall into the category of having been longer in religious life making the Medior Sisters have more time in coaching to develop interpersonal competence relationships which are also presented in the guidelines of Sisters Of Charity Of St Charles Borromeus (2012). The longer the sisters are in religious life, the higher the level of interpersonal competence.

From the research that has been carried out, the scale items used are 54 out of 60 items that the researcher made. An overview of the achievements of the item scores of 149 Junior Sisters and mediors referring to table, there are no items with low and very low categorization. After categorizing the scale item scores, the researcher did not find any items that fell into the very low or low level categories. The researcher chose to raise the topic of coaching based on items in the medium category.

There are 4 items with the lowest scores (items 30, 32, 36, 53) that fall into the medium category, and are given proposed coaching topics for competency improvement. The proposed coaching topics are 1) Overcoming Self-Doubt in Public Service: Practical strategies to manage nervousness or anxiety before public speaking. 2) Conflict Management Strategies: Understanding different approaches to resolving conflicts, such as compromise, collaboration, or accommodation 3)

Becoming a CB Sister who is more Assertive: Techniques to overcome fear or anxiety when expressing opinions honestly and openly.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The following conclusions are summarized based on the research data provided: 1) The proposed hypothesis is proven and accepted, as seen from the higher interpersonal competence of Medior Sisters (mean: 188.380) compared to Junior Sisters (mean: 179.243) with a p value of <0.001. 2) Junior Sisters have very high interpersonal competence, with a percentage of 59%. 3) Medior Sisters showed a very high level of interpersonal competence, with a percentage of 67%.5) There are 4 items with the lowest scores (items 30, 32, 36, 53) that fall into the medium category, and are given proposed coaching topics for competency improvement. The proposed coaching topics are 1) Overcoming Self-Doubt in Public Service: Practical strategies to manage nervousness or anxiety before public speaking. 2) Conflict Management Strategies: Understanding different approaches to resolve conflicts, such as compromise, collaboration or accommodation 3) Becoming a more Assertive CB Sister: Techniques to overcome fear or anxiety when expressing opinions honestly and openly.

This study is limited to the subjects, Junior Sisters and Medior Sisters of CB Congregation. While in the formation of CB sisters there are several groups of categories that could potentially be included in the study.

The results indicate that the interpersonal competence of Junior Sisters is lower than that of Medior Sisters when viewed from the mean difference. However, it is important to note that the interpersonal competence of both groups falls within the high to very high categories. This suggests that, although there is a significant difference between the groups, both Junior and Medior Sisters generally demonstrate a strong level of interpersonal competence. The researcher suggested that Junior Sisters improve their interpersonal competence even though the score is already high (Pedhu, 2022; Allemand *et al*., 2015).

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