

**STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC READINESS AND CHARACTER OF  
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN GARUT REGENCY IN FACING THE  
TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION OR THE WORLD OF WORK IN  
THE DIGITAL ERA**

Taufiqulloh Dahlan<sup>1</sup>, Asep Deni Normansyah<sup>2</sup>, Yuni Indriyani<sup>3</sup>,  
Cep Miftah Khoerudin<sup>4</sup>, Saiman Rosamsi<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Universitas Pasundan

<sup>1</sup>taufiqulloh@unpas.ac.id, <sup>2</sup>asepdeninormansyah@unpas.ac.id, <sup>3</sup>yuniindriyani@unpas.ac.id,  
<sup>4</sup>cep miftah khoerudin@unpas.ac.id, <sup>5</sup>saimanbio@unpas.ac.id

**ABSTRACT**

*The digital era requires students to possess both academic readiness and strong character to face the transition to higher education or the world of work. This community service program aimed to strengthen academic readiness and build the character of high school students in Garut Regency, particularly at SMAN 19 Garut. The activities were carried out through socialization, learning motivation training, digital literacy, and soft skills provision on August 14, 2025, by lecturers from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Pasundan, as part of the Community Service Program (KKN). The results showed an increase in students' understanding of the importance of digital literacy, academic readiness, and character strengthening such as discipline, responsibility, and work ethic. In conclusion, this program effectively provided students with academic preparation and character development to face the challenges of transitioning to higher education or the workforce. Overall, this community service program proved effective in equipping high school students in Garut Regency with academic readiness and character strengthening. It not only enhanced understanding but also encouraged students to be better prepared for a challenging future. In the future, similar activities should be expanded to other schools so that more students can benefit and be truly ready to face the transition to higher education or the world of work in the digital era.*

*Keywords: academic readiness, character, educational transition, world of work, digital era*

**A. Introduction**

The changing times, marked by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the rapid advancement of the digital era, have brought significant impacts on various aspects of life, including education.

Digital transformation has driven the emergence of new technology-based learning systems, where students are required to master digital literacy skills, think critically, and possess a high level of adaptability to change. This condition affirms that academic ability alone is no

longer sufficient to guarantee students' success in the future; it must also be supported by strong character traits such as discipline, responsibility, integrity, independence, and the ability to work collaboratively in teams (Dahlan, T., 2023).

High school students are in a crucial developmental phase, as at this stage they face strategic choices: to continue their studies in higher education or to enter the workforce. This decision requires not only academic readiness in terms of knowledge mastery and learning skills but also non-academic readiness, including psychological, social, and personal character aspects. Therefore, academic readiness and character strengthening are two fundamental aspects that complement each other and must be instilled early so that students can face life transitions with greater confidence and competitiveness (Syamsuddin, 2021).

In Garut Regency, particularly at SMAN 19 Garut, various challenges remain to be addressed in preparing students for the digital era. These challenges include underdeveloped levels of digital literacy, limitations in managing the learning process effectively, suboptimal learning motivation, and

insufficient mental readiness to compete in higher education or the workforce. If these issues are not given immediate attention, there is concern that they will negatively impact the competitiveness of high school graduates at both regional and national levels. Therefore, interventions through mentoring programs are needed to provide students with comprehensive provisions so that they are better prepared to face global challenges (Dahlan T., Darta, Alamsyah T.A., Wardhani I.S., 2021).

As a form of academic responsibility toward society, lecturers of FKIP Universitas Pasundan carry out community service programs as part of the *Kuliah Kerja Nyata* (KKN) activities. This program specifically focuses on strengthening the academic readiness and character development of high school students, with SMAN 19 Garut as the primary target. Through socialization activities, motivational training, digital literacy programs, and soft skills development, it is expected that students will not only gain additional knowledge but also build positive attitudes, learning enthusiasm, and personal skills relevant to today's needs. Thus, this activity serves as a concrete effort to prepare a young

generation that is excellent, has strong character, and is ready to face the transition to higher education or the workforce in the digital era (Dahlan T., Darhim, Juandi D., 2022).

## **B. Method of Implementation**

This community service activity was carried out on Thursday, August 14, 2025, at SMAN 19 Garut as part of the *Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN)* program initiated by the lecturers of FKIP Universitas Pasundan. The activity was designed using a participatory approach that emphasized the active involvement of students in each session, making it not only one-directional but also interactive and applicable to the students' needs (Feby Inggriyani, Acep Roni Hamdani, Taufiqulloh Dahlan, 2019).

The implementation method consisted of several stages of activities. First, socialization and interactive lectures, where students were presented with explanations about the challenges of the digital era, the urgency of academic readiness, and the importance of character strengthening in facing global competition. The lecture was delivered in a communicative manner and supported with real life examples to help students

better understand the context being discussed (Gardenia N., Herman T., Juandi D., Dahlan T., Kandaga T., 2021).

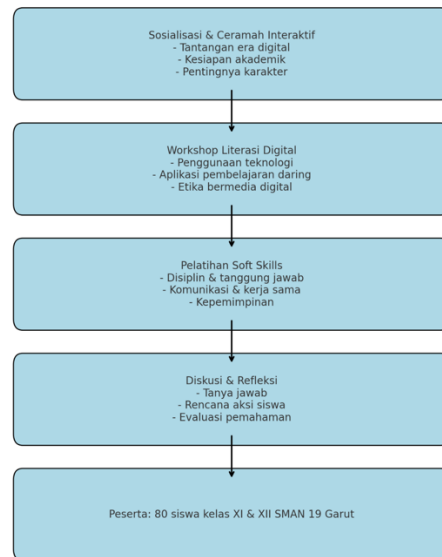


Diagram 1. Flow of Community Service Activity Method

Second, a digital literacy workshop that provided basic training related to the use of technology as a tool to support learning and self-development. In this session, students were introduced to various online learning applications, strategies for searching valid information, as well as ethics in using digital media. This aimed to ensure that students became more skilled and wise in utilizing technology.

Third, soft skills training that focused on strengthening non-academic

aspects crucial for the workplace as well as daily life, such as discipline, effective communication, responsibility, teamwork, and leadership. This activity was packaged through simulations, educational games, and role-play so that students could learn directly through practical experience, not just theory.

Fourth, discussion and reflection, where students were given the opportunity to express their opinions, ask questions, and formulate personal action plans that they could apply in facing their academic future or the world of work. This session also served as a space for joint evaluation to ensure that the materials delivered were truly understood and applied in real life.

The participants of the activity consisted of 80 twelfth-grade students from SMAN 19 Garut. This number was sufficiently representative to reflect the needs and conditions of students who were in the phase of preparing for the transition to higher education or the workforce. With their active involvement throughout the entire series of activities, this community service program is expected to provide tangible impacts in improving academic readiness while also building strong character as essential provisions to face the digital era.

### **C. Result and Discussion**

This community service activity produced several important findings that indicate significant development among the students after participating in the entire series of activities.

#### **1. Improvement in Academic Awareness**

The students began to realize the importance of effective learning strategies as essential preparation for facing various challenges, both in their daily learning process and in preparing for university entrance examinations. They understood that time management, study planning, and setting academic goals are key factors in achieving success. This understanding is expected to reduce the tendency to engage in last-minute, instant learning before exams and instead foster more structured study habits that are oriented toward long-term achievement.



**Figure 1. Implementation of the Activity**

## **2. Strengthening Digital Literacy**

Through the workshop, students were not only introduced to various online learning applications but also given an understanding of the importance of selecting valid and credible digital learning sources. In addition, students were trained to use social media more wisely, so that they did not merely act as passive users but were able to utilize technology productively. This aligns with 21st-century skills that require mastery of digital literacy, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

## **3. Development of Positive Character**

Through various simulations and soft skills training, students showed progress in aspects such as

responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence. These character traits serve as important provisions for facing global competition, which demands more than just intellectual intelligence. Students with a strong work ethic and good integrity will be better prepared to compete in the real world, both in academic and professional environments (Lickona, 2012).

## **4. Students' Enthusiasm and Active Participation**

All activities were carried out in an interactive atmosphere, where students actively engaged in discussions, asked questions, and enthusiastically participated in simulations. This indicates that students have a strong need for coaching programs that address both academic and character aspects. This enthusiasm also serves as an indicator of the success of the participatory methods used in the community service activities.





**Figure 2. Students' Activities**

Overall, the community service activity conducted at SMAN 19 Garut proved to have a positive impact on the students. They not only gained new knowledge about learning strategies and digital literacy but also experienced character strengthening that supports their readiness to face the transition to higher education as well as the workforce. Thus, this program can serve as an educational intervention model that is relevant to be continuously implemented in other schools in Garut Regency and beyond.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The community service activity carried out by the lecturers of FKIP Universitas Pasundan at SMAN 19 Garut has made a tangible contribution to strengthening students' academic readiness while also building their character to be better prepared for the

challenges of the digital era. Through a series of structured activities, students not only gained an understanding of the importance of digital literacy, effective learning strategies, and time management, but also experienced character reinforcement in aspects such as responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence. The combination of academic skills and soft skills serves as an important foundation for students to achieve success, whether they continue to higher education or enter an increasingly competitive workforce.

Furthermore, this activity demonstrates that collaboration between universities and high schools can create positive synergy in preparing the younger generation to face the changes of the times. Therefore, it is recommended that similar programs be sustained with a broader scope, both in terms of the number of schools involved and the variety of materials delivered. For instance, strengthening areas such as digital entrepreneurship, global communication skills, and financial literacy that are relevant to 21st-century needs. Thus, this community service program does not merely serve as an incidental activity but has the potential to develop into a

continuous coaching model that is adaptive to the dynamics of the times.

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