

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING KIND, POLITE, AND POSITIVE WORDS AS A FORM OF NOBLE CONDUCT IN GIVING PRAISE FOR PERFORMANCE, WORK, AND ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Language has a fundamental role in human life, not only as a means of communication, but also as a reflection of a person's character, attitude, and noble conduct. Good, polite, and positive speech can strengthen social relationships, increase motivation, and maintain harmony in daily interactions. One concrete form of positive speech is praise. Sincere praise for one's appearance, work, or achievements can increase self-confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm to continue developing. This article is prepared through a literature review by examining various sources, including books, national and international journals, and lecture materials related to noble conduct. The discussion focuses on the importance of positive speech in giving praise for performance, work, and achievement, with reference to theories of psychology, communication, and character education. Theories used include Maslow, Herzberg, DeVito, Lickona, Fredrickson, Seligman, Deci & Ryan, as well as contemporary research on positive emotions and appreciation. The results show that praise plays an important role in creating a healthy academic and professional atmosphere, strengthening social bonds, and supporting the formation of a positive organisational culture. However, praise must be given proportionally and sincerely so as not to create a manipulative or excessive impression. Thus, getting into the habit of saying kind words, being kind, and being sincere can help to build a positive organisational culture. However, praise must be given proportionally and sincerely so as not to create a manipulative or excessive impression. Thus, getting used to saying kind, polite, and positive words is a real form of noble conduct that is relevant in personal, academic, and work life.

Keywords: language; positive words; politeness; praise; noble conduct

INTRODUCTION

Language has a special place in human life. Through language, people not only exchange information, but also express their personal values, character and integrity. Words can be the bridge that connects people to each other in social and professional relationships. Kind, polite and positive speech reflects a noble conduct attitude. Conversely, harsh, negative, and demeaning speech can hurt, damage relationships, and cause conflict.

One tangible form of positive speech is praise. Praise is an expression of appreciation addressed to someone for their performance, work, or achievements. Every individual essentially needs recognition. This is in line with Maslow's (1943) needs theory which places esteem needs as one of the important levels in the hierarchy of human needs. Praise can help meet these needs so that a person is more confident and able to achieve self-actualisation.

In an organisational context, Robbins & Judge (2017) emphasise that appreciation and rewards can improve individual performance and loyalty. Meanwhile, Herzberg (1959) through the two-factor motivation theory states that recognition is one of the motivational factors that encourage work enthusiasm. Thus, giving sincere and proportional praise is not just lip service, but part of an effective communication strategy to improve the quality of human interaction.

Furthermore, the positive psychology movement introduced by Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) emphasises the importance of paying attention to human strengths and positive potential. Sincere praise is one form of positive psychology practice that promotes happiness, motivation and psychological well-being. Thus, the use of polite and respectful words is not only a communication ethic, but also a means to develop self-potential and healthier social relationships.

In addition, Magnis-Suseno (1987) asserts that nobility is shown through respect and politeness embodied in everyday speech and behaviour. Therefore, cultivating good, polite and positive speech can be seen as a concrete form of practising the value of noble conduct in personal, social and professional life.

This article discusses the importance of kind, polite, and positive speech in the context of praise as a practice of noble conduct. The following literature review is used to provide a theoretical foundation for the analysis in this paper.

1. Interpersonal Communication Theory

DeVito (2013) explains that language not only serves to convey messages but also reflects the attitudes and values held by the speaker. Polite speech is a form of ethical communication that strengthens social relationships.

2. The Concept of Noble Virtue

Magnis-Suseno (1987) emphasizes that noble virtuous behavior is reflected in respect, politeness, and appreciation for human dignity. In Javanese culture, politeness in language is a highly valued manifestation of noble ethics.

3. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

Herzberg (1959) proposed that recognition is a motivational factor that drives work enthusiasm. Praise can be seen as an effective form of recognition for increasing job satisfaction.

4. Maslow's Theory of Needs

Maslow (1943) explained that the need for esteem (esteem needs) is an important stage in the hierarchy of human needs. Praise plays a significant role in fulfilling this need, thus helping a person achieve self-actualization.

5. Organizational Behavior

Robbins & Judge (2017) state that appreciation in the workplace is closely related to increased individual motivation, performance, and loyalty. Praise as a form of appreciation has a positive influence on organizational culture.

6. Character Education

According to Lickona (1991), character education emphasizes the importance of moral values, such as respect and responsibility, which are reflected in everyday speech. Polite language is not only a means of communication, but also a means of shaping individual character and virtue.

7. Broaden-and-Build Theory

Fredrickson (2001), through his broaden-and-build theory, explains that positive emotions, including gratitude and praise, function to broaden a person's thinking and build long-term psychological, social, and intellectual resources. This means that the use of kind and polite

language not only has a short-term impact but also strengthens psychological resilience and the quality of social relationships in the long term.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article discusses the importance of kind, polite, and positive speech in the context of praise as a practice of noble conduct. Data sources are obtained from literature studies in the form of books, journals, and noble conduct lecture materials. The method used is descriptive-argumentative analysis with a logical, systematic, and holistic approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of Kind, Polite, and Positive Speech

Kind, polite, and positive speech is a true reflection of a person's personality and character. According to DeVito (2013), effective interpersonal communication is determined not only by the content of the message, but also by how it is delivered. Polite and empathetic words foster a harmonious, respectful interaction, and build a positive emotional bond between speaker and audience. Conversely, rude, cynical, or negative speech tends to damage social relationships, spark conflict, and create emotional distance between individuals, which can hinder the creation of harmony in shared life.

Magnis-Suseno (1987) emphasized that noble character in Indonesian culture, particularly Javanese culture, is manifested through respect and polite speech. Using language as a symbol of respect for others and a reflection of highly valued moral values. In everyday practice, simple expressions such as "Thank you for helping me" or "I appreciate your efforts" are not mere polite words, but rather expressions of sincere appreciation for others. These positive phrases can strengthen a sense of brotherhood, foster a cooperative atmosphere, and create a harmonious social environment.

Furthermore, polite speech can be a means of strengthening social solidarity. By showing respect for others through words, we are instilling the values of empathy, caring, and a sense of togetherness. Lickona (1991) adds that polite language is part of character education, which will form good habits if practiced consistently from an early age. This demonstrates that positive words have the power to educate and shape a more ethical personality.

Furthermore, research in communication psychology confirms that positive speech can reduce stress levels, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and increase life satisfaction. Even in modern organizations, a culture of polite communication is considered a vital asset supporting the achievement of shared goals. Therefore, polite and positive speech is not merely a communication ethic, but also a strategy for building harmonious, solid relationships rooted in the noble values that are the identity of the Indonesian nation.

Compliments on Appearance

Appearance is the first aspect noticed when someone interacts with others. Impression management theory in social psychology explains that first impressions significantly influence how others perceive us. Therefore, appreciation of appearance plays a crucial role in boosting one's self-confidence and strengthening interpersonal relationships. A neat, clean, and situationally appropriate appearance is often considered a reflection of personality, ethics, and respect for others.

Maslow (1943), in his theory of human needs, stated that esteem needs are at the top of the psychological development ladder. A simple compliment on appearance, such as "You look neat and energetic today," can provide a positive psychological boost. This kind of praise not only improves a person's mood but also fosters self-confidence, which can impact the quality of their interactions throughout the day.

In a cultural context, Magnis-Suseno (1987) explains that Javanese people highly value etiquette when assessing someone's appearance. A polite appearance is considered a form of respect, both for oneself and for others. Therefore, compliments on one's appearance are not mere polite remarks, but rather a form of respect and recognition of personal and social dignity. A compliment like, "The batik you're wearing is beautiful, it perfectly suits the atmosphere of this event," for example, not only acknowledges one's appearance but also acknowledges the cultural values inherent in the clothing choice.

Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham (2010) found that appreciation in the form of praise strengthens the quality of interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Carnegie (2010) emphasized

that sincere praise is key to building social closeness. Therefore, complimenting one's appearance should not be merely lip service but should stem from genuine appreciation.

Furthermore, research in modern social psychology also shows that sincerely appreciated appearance can strengthen social relationships. Someone who receives praise tends to be more open, friendly, and confident in communicating. This aligns with the noble conduct that teach mutual respect and appreciation for others in all aspects, including appearance. Therefore, praise for appearance not only impacts an individual's psychological well-being but also strengthens social, cultural, and moral values within the community.

Compliment for Work

In the workplace, praise for work has crucial strategic value. Herzberg (1959) in his Two-Factor Theory stated that recognition is a motivational factor that can increase job satisfaction and productivity. This means that work well done not only produces output that is beneficial to the organization, but also needs to be appreciated so that workers feel valued and motivated to continue improving their performance.

For example, a superior who says, "Your report is very detailed and helps with decision-making" will have a positive psychological impact on employees. This kind of remark not only increases work motivation but also strengthens loyalty, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging to the organization. In fact, research in human resource management shows that employees who receive frequent appreciation have higher levels of employee engagement than those who receive less recognition.

Robbins & Judge (2017) add that a culture of appreciation in the workplace increases employees' emotional attachment to the company. This kind of culture creates a more harmonious, collaborative, and healthy work environment. In other words, praise for work is not just a short-term form of communication, but also a long-term social investment that strengthens a positive work culture.

Grant & Gino (2010) show that expressions of gratitude and appreciation can motivate prosocial behavior, making employees more motivated to help coworkers and contribute to the team. Thus, praise for work not only provides individual motivation but also fosters cooperation and a positive climate in the workplace.

In the context of noble conduct, praise for work can be interpreted as a form of appreciation for a person's hard work, responsibility, and integrity. This aligns with the principle of respect in Javanese culture, which emphasizes the importance of giving sincere appreciation to others. Praise can also prevent envy, jealousy, or conflict in the workplace because each individual feels their contribution is recognized.

Furthermore, praise for work also serves as a means of building healthy two-way communication between superiors and subordinates. When a superior is able to offer sincere praise, they instill trust, which ultimately strengthens leadership effectiveness. Therefore, praise for work can be considered a crucial pillar in creating a productive, harmonious organization that upholds the values of noble conduct.

Praise for Achievement

Achievement is the tangible result of a person's effort, dedication, and commitment to achieving a specific goal. Every achievement reflects an individual's hard work, consistency, and responsibility in realizing their full potential. Praise for achievement plays a strategic role because it serves as a form of social recognition that not only provides emotional satisfaction but also motivates individuals to continue striving for greater heights in the future.

Maslow (1943), in his hierarchy of human needs, explained that recognition for achievement plays a crucial role in helping individuals build self-esteem and achieve self-actualization. Without recognition, a person may feel that their efforts are in vain, thus losing motivation. With sincere praise, an individual feels more appreciated and is encouraged to maintain and improve the quality of their work and efforts.

Lickona (1991) emphasized that appreciation for achievement is also an integral part of character education. By praising achievement, individuals are taught to appreciate the value of hard work, discipline, responsibility, and perseverance. This not only shapes individuals who excel academically or professionally but also develops a personality of noble character.

Covey (2004) emphasizes that one effective habit is appreciating others' achievements, which is part of building relationships of mutual respect. Thus, praising achievements aligns with basic human needs and strengthens a culture of appreciation.

For example, saying "Congratulations on your success in becoming a national debate champion" is not just a series of words, but a form of recognition for someone's hard work, ability, and consistency. This kind of praise has a positive psychological impact, as individuals feel their efforts are recognized and appreciated. In an organizational or workplace environment, recognition of employee achievements also creates a climate of healthy competition. Employees who receive recognition feel motivated to maintain their performance, while other colleagues are encouraged to improve themselves to achieve similar achievements.

Furthermore, from a noble conduct perspective, giving praise for achievements also reflects noble values such as respect, fairness, and empathy. Sincere praise for someone's accomplishments demonstrates that we appreciate the efforts and achievements of others without envy or jealousy. This value aligns with the Indonesian philosophy of life, which upholds the spirit of mutual cooperation and togetherness, where individual success is considered part of collective pride.

Furthermore, praise for achievements also has broad social impact. In the educational context, appreciation for student achievement can foster a generation that is more self-confident, creative, and healthily competitive. Meanwhile, in the workplace, recognition for achievement creates a dynamic, productive, and quality-oriented organizational culture. Therefore, praise for accomplishments is not merely a spontaneous expression, but also a vital instrument in building character, strengthening motivation, and embodying noble values in social life.

The Impact of Sincere vs. Excessive Praise

Sincere praise has positive psychological effects, such as increased self-confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm for daily activities. Sincere praise can serve as a form of positive reinforcement that reinforces good behavior, encouraging individuals to continue repeating those positive actions. From a psychological perspective, appropriately given praise serves as a positive stimulus that strengthens a person's intrinsic motivation.

However, excessive or disproportionate praise can actually have the opposite effect. Praise given too frequently without a clear reason can give the impression of being manipulative, as if it is merely a tool to curry favor or control others. In fact, excessive praise can foster arrogance or a sense of superiority in the recipient. Rakhmat (2012) emphasized that inauthentic communication can lead to distrust, both in the family, educational, and workplace environments.

Emmons & McCullough (2003) demonstrated that the practice of counting blessings or expressing appreciation can increase happiness and life satisfaction. Conversely, excessive or insincere praise can arouse suspicion and diminish the meaning of the praise itself. Therefore, it is important to maintain balance in giving praise so that a positive message is truly conveyed.

For example, a superior who excessively praises subordinates without a clear basis will arouse suspicion. Astute employees will perceive such praise as a manipulative strategy, not genuine appreciation. As a result, trust between individuals can erode, and praise loses its positive meaning. In another context, a teacher who excessively praises all students without considering the quality of their work can undermine objectivity and demotivate students to genuinely strive for excellence.

Therefore, noble conduct emphasizes the importance of balance in speech. Praise should be given proportionally, appropriately, and based on reality. The principle of *tapa selira*, or tolerance in Javanese culture, teaches that every word, including praise, should be delivered with consideration and sincerity. Thus, praise is not only a personal accolade, but also a means of building trust, harmony, and social solidarity.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that praise does not always have to be verbal. Simple actions like a smile, a nod, or other appreciative gesture can be a genuine form of nonverbal praise. The right combination of verbal and nonverbal praise will reinforce the positive message and make the recipient feel truly appreciated. In other words, sincere and well-balanced praise is part of polite communication that reflects noble conduct in everyday life.

Practice in Academic Environments

In education, praise is an effective method for increasing learning motivation and shaping student character. According to Lickona (1991), praise is an important instrument in character education because it fosters self-confidence, responsibility, and a spirit of continuous effort. Praise given appropriately will help students become more confident in expressing ideas, more enthusiastic about participating in the learning process, and more confident in facing academic challenges.

Deci & Ryan (2000), using Self-Determination Theory, explain that praise helps fulfill three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, the practice of giving appropriate praise can encourage students to feel more empowered, capable, and connected to their environment.

For example, a lecturer who says, "Your analysis is very critical and your argument is logical" to a student not only recognizes their thinking ability but also encourages the student to continue honing their analytical skills. This type of praise helps create a conducive, collaborative, and fearless academic environment. Students who feel appreciated will be more open in discussions, bold in expressing ideas, and less afraid to make mistakes because they believe their efforts are appreciated.

Furthermore, research in educational psychology shows that students who frequently receive positive reinforcement in the form of praise tend to have higher intrinsic motivation than those who only receive punishment or criticism. This intrinsic motivation is far more important because it encourages students to learn not out of fear of punishment, but rather out of an inner drive to develop. This aligns with the Self-Determination theory of motivation, which emphasizes that recognition and appreciation help fulfill basic human psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and social connectedness.

From a noble conduct perspective, praise in an academic environment also reflects respect for students' efforts and struggles. Teachers or lecturers who offer sincere praise instill moral values such as appreciation, empathy, and respect for others. These values are important because they foster a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also well-mannered and cultured.

Furthermore, an academic culture that values through praise can reduce negative practices such as unhealthy competition, bullying, or putting down students. Conversely, praise builds an inclusive and supportive academic climate, encouraging a spirit of collaborative learning. Therefore, praise in education is not only an effective pedagogical strategy but also a tangible manifestation of noble character in shaping a generation of integrity.

Practices in the Workplace

In the workplace, a culture of giving praise has a significant influence on employee performance, satisfaction, and loyalty. Robbins & Judge (2017) suggest that recognition from leadership contributes significantly to increased job satisfaction, commitment, and emotional attachment (employee engagement) to the organization. Sincere praise can create a sense of appreciation, which ultimately motivates employees to work harder and consistently contribute their best.

Algoe, Fredrickson, & Gable (2013) add that expressions of gratitude and appreciation have an important social function in strengthening interpersonal bonds in the workplace. This demonstrates that a culture of mutual appreciation through praise not only builds motivation but also strengthens relationships among organizational members.

For example, in multinational companies, the practice of employee recognition is systematically instilled in the culture. A simple remark like "Your teamwork is outstanding, the project was completed ahead of schedule" not only boosts individual morale but also strengthens teamwork. This demonstrates that praise not only affects an employee personally but also plays a role in strengthening group cohesion and collective spirit within the organization.

Furthermore, a culture of appreciation within an organization also serves as an employee retention strategy. Companies that frequently recognize their employees' contributions are better able to retain talented workers than those that neglect it. This aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), which asserts that motivational factors, such as recognition, significantly influence long-term job satisfaction. Therefore, praise is not merely a matter of words, but an effective managerial strategy for reducing turnover and increasing employee loyalty.

From a noble conduct perspective, the practice of giving praise in the workplace also reflects ethical and moral values, such as respect, fairness, and appreciation for the efforts of others. Superiors who are able to give praise appropriately are cultivating a culture of mutual respect in their workplace. This aligns with the principle of mutual cooperation inherent in Indonesian culture, which prioritizes togetherness and cooperation to achieve common goals.

Furthermore, modern research in organizational behavior also shows that a healthy praise culture is directly related to increased innovation. Employees who feel appreciated tend to be more willing to put forward new ideas, take initiative, and actively participate in decision-making. This is because praise can create a psychologically safe work environment, where every individual feels their opinion is valued.

Thus, the practice of giving praise in the workplace not only improves short-term performance but also contributes to the development of a healthy, innovative, and virtuous organizational culture. Sincere and well-targeted praise is a crucial pillar in creating a productive work environment that upholds noble values.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite the immense benefits of praise, in practice, various obstacles hinder the development of a culture of appreciation. One such barrier is a harsh, rigid, and unappreciative communication culture. Many people find it easier to criticize than to praise, as criticism is perceived as more "educational," while praise is seen as unnecessary or even demeaning. As a result, praise is often rarely given even when someone deserves it.

Rakhmat (2012) emphasized that communication barriers can arise from differences in perception, doubts about sincerity, or even a sense of prestige on the part of the praise-giver. In a competitive society, giving praise is sometimes seen as demeaning, as if acknowledging another's excellence will make them appear inferior. This mindset can hinder the growth of a culture of mutual respect and erode a sense of togetherness in social and professional life.

Furthermore, environmental factors also play a significant role. In organizations with stressful work climates, praise is often overlooked as irrelevant to work targets or achievement. Yet, in such stressful situations, praise is essential for maintaining employee morale, motivation, and mental health. When individuals are faced with demands without recognition, they tend to experience emotional exhaustion (burnout), which results in decreased productivity.

Another common obstacle is cultural differences and individual backgrounds. In some cultures, direct praise can be considered excessive or even offensive, while in others, praise is considered a social norm. This difference in perception can lead to misunderstandings if the person giving the praise doesn't understand the recipient's cultural context.

From a noble conduct perspective, these challenges should be addressed with wisdom, humility, and sincerity. Noble conduct teaches the principles of *andhap asor* (humility) and *tepa selira* (tolerance) to help individuals position themselves appropriately in communication. By applying these values, praise can be delivered proportionately, culturally, and received well without causing misunderstandings.

Therefore, while there are obstacles to giving praise, they can be overcome by increasing communication awareness, understanding the cultural context, and cultivating noble values in every interaction. If these challenges are successfully overcome, praise can be an effective means of strengthening social relationships, fostering motivation, and building a more harmonious work and educational environment.

Strategies for Cultivating Positive Speech

To build a culture of positive speech, a consistent, sustainable strategy is needed that touches all aspects of life, including family, school, and the workplace. This strategy cannot be implemented instantly; it must be instilled through daily habits until it eventually becomes part of the individual's character and collective culture.

First, make it a habit to express simple expressions of appreciation every day, such as saying thank you for a small favor or praising someone for even the smallest effort. Although seemingly simple, these expressions of appreciation can have a significant impact on a person's mood and strengthen interpersonal relationships. Small habits like this can begin within the family environment, for example, parents making a habit of saying "Thank you for helping set the table" to their children. This will foster a sense of appreciation and shape children's personalities that are accustomed to appreciating others.

Second, provide interpersonal communication training within the organization so that individuals become accustomed to expressing appreciation appropriately. Many modern organizations have begun to recognize the importance of the soft skill of positive communication. Through training, employees and leaders learn how to deliver praise effectively, proportionately, and appropriately in context. This way, a culture of appreciation becomes not only a personal habit but also integrated into the organizational culture.

DeVito (2013) states that effective communication must be based on empathy and clarity of message. This emphasizes that positive speech is not just words, but a form of genuine concern that can build trust. Similarly, Lickona (1991) emphasizes the importance of instilling positive values from

an early age, both at school and in the family. Schools, for example, can build a culture of appreciation through simple rewards for students, such as certificates, verbal commendations, or recognition in front of the class. Covey (2004) emphasizes that building a culture of appreciation is part of effective habits in social interaction. Therefore, strategies for cultivating positive speech require not only invitations but also concrete practices consistently implemented by individuals and institutions.

Third, create a formal reward system within the organization to strengthen the culture of appreciation. Employee recognition programs within companies, student achievement awards at school, or public appreciation in the community are examples of formal strategies that can strengthen a culture of positive speech. This reward system is crucial so that the value of appreciation is not only implemented informally but also receives structural support.

In addition to these strategies, the role of role models from community leaders, teachers, or leaders is also crucial. A leader who cultivates positive speech will have a powerful influence on those around him. In the context of noble character, this reflects the principle of "ing ngarso sung tulodo" (leading the way, leading by example), which involves setting a concrete example of politeness, respect, and proportionate praise.

With these strategies, a culture of positive communication can be internalized in daily life and become part of societal habits. Ultimately, polite speech and sincere praise are not merely communication tools but also a means of strengthening social bonds, maintaining harmony, and reflecting the nation's noble character, which upholds the values of respect, empathy, and solidarity.

CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion on the importance of using kind, polite, and positive words when complimenting someone's appearance, work, or achievements, it can be concluded that words have great power in shaping an individual's character while strengthening social bonds, as sincere praise has been shown to increase self-confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm in educational contexts, the workplace, and social life. The use of such words plays a crucial role in building harmonious relationships, increasing motivation, and reflecting nobility, as praise for appearance, work, and achievements can fulfill basic psychological needs (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, 1959; Deci & Ryan, 2000), strengthen social bonds (Lambert et al., 2010; Algoe et al., 2013), and encourage the development of positive character (Lickona, 1991). Furthermore, positive psychology theory (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001) emphasize that positive speech contributes to the development of human potential and broadens the mind, while expressing appreciation through praise has been shown to increase happiness and psychological well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). Thus, cultivating polite and positive speech is not only a matter of communication ethics but also an important strategy for building individual happiness, social harmony, and a more humane organizational and educational culture; however, the practice of giving praise also faces challenges, such as a harsh communication culture, a sense of prestige, or a lack of sincerity, making it necessary to develop strategies through daily habits, interpersonal communication training, and formal reward systems. Therefore, polite words and sincere praise are not mere lip service but rather a concrete manifestation of noble character that must be maintained and practiced in daily life so that through a culture of positive speech, society can build more harmonious, productive, and noble relationships in line with the Indonesian national identity.

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