SOCIAL PRESENCE THROUGH CULTURE: EMBEDDING MARUNG VALUES IN GROUP GUIDANCE AT A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT
Active peer interaction is essential for cognitive engagement, affective participation, and achievement in vocational education, yet field observations at SMK PGRI 5 Jember showed many students remained passive during group work, signaling weak social presence—the felt sense of being connected and "real" to others—which undermines collaboration, confidence, and learning quality. Leveraging the local Marung culture of togetherness, reciprocity, openness, equality, and empathy, this study designed, validated, and evaluated a culturally grounded group-guidance module to enhance students' social presence. Using an R&D approach with the ADDIE model, the module underwent content and media expert validation and was tested via a one-group pretest–posttest quasi-experimental design. A 25-item Social Presence Questionnaire measured affective, interactive, and cohesive dimensions before and after the intervention; quantitative analysis employed the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and Cronbach's alpha, and qualitative observations/reflections supplied contextual support. Results showed significant gains in social presence from a pre-test mean of 49.9% (low–moderate) to a post-test mean of 77% (high), $p < .001$; feasibility ratings were high (83–83.5%), and reliability was strong ($\alpha = .888$), with observations confirming more balanced participation, respectful dialogue, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving. These findings indicate that integrating Marung values into structured guidance effectively fosters social presence, equitable participation, and empathic communication among vocational students. Theoretically, the work extends Social Presence Theory by demonstrating that culturally situated norms can strengthen interpersonal connectedness in face-to-face classrooms; practically, teachers and counselors can embed equitable turn-taking, respectful disagreement, and peer support into routine group learning, and policymakers can incorporate social-presence indicators into school climate assessments while allocating time for culturally informed guidance. Future research should replicate across multiple vocational schools with control/comparison groups, examine long-term effects on collaborative problem-solving, attendance, and well-being, and use mixed-method or experimental designs to clarify mechanisms linking Marung-based interaction norms to sustained engagement and academic outcomes.

Keywords: ADDIE Model; Cultural Values; Group Guidance; Social Presence; Vocational Education

INTRODUCTION

Across secondary and vocational education, social interaction is a key driver of learners' cognitive engagement, affect, and achievement. Recent school-based evidence reports that the quality of peer interaction accounts for a sizable share of variance in learning gains—illustratively, Oktaviani et al. (2022) estimate a 27.8% contribution of classroom social interaction to learning outcomes—underscoring that students' opportunities to relate, discuss, and co-construct meaning matter for performance and well-being. Field observations at SMK PGRI 5 Jember during school practicum revealed a common pattern: discussions were dominated by one or two outspoken students while most remained passive; many learners displayed low psychological participation (e.g., off-task talk, device use, drowsiness) despite physical attendance. Such patterns signal thin social presence—the extent to which learners experience others (and are experienced by others) as "real" persons in an interaction, which is consequential for motivation, persistence, and achievement (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Swan & Shih, 2005; Richardson, Maeda, Lv, & Caskurlu, 2017). Classic and contemporary work shows that when social presence is strong, students report greater satisfaction, deeper processing, and higher performance in both face-to-face and technology-mediated contexts (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer,

2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Richardson et al., 2017; Li, 2022). Conversely, low presence correlates with superficial engagement and withdrawal (Kreijns, Kirschner, & Jochems, 2003; Kreijns, Kirschner, Jochems, & van Buuren, 2011). The local cultural ecology can either buffer or exacerbate these dynamics. In Jember (East Java), the Marung tradition—informal gathering in village warungs to converse, exchange news, and deliberate—embeds values of togetherness, reciprocity, openness, equality, and empathy (Widiyawati, 2019; Wardani, 2015; Akbar & Ansori, 2024). Educationally, such values plausibly scaffold belonging, respectful dialogue, and peer support, all central to social presence (Whiteside, 2015; Kreijns, Xu, & Weidlich, 2022). Yet, modern schooling often privileges individual performance and digital soloing, unintentionally thinning communal ties. This confluence of needs and assets motivates a culturally grounded intervention at SMK PGRI 5 Jember that mobilizes Marung values to strengthen social presence and, through it, participation and learning.

Problem 1: Low active participation in group learning. Many students hesitate to voice ideas, ask questions, or disagree constructively in discussions, producing one-way or dyadic exchanges rather than collaborative sense-making (field notes; Oktaviani et al., 2022). Problem 2: Weak psychological engagement (social presence). Students are physically present but socially absent—limited eye contact, minimal turn-taking, and shallow affective expression (Kreijns et al., 2011; Richardson et al., 2017). Problem 3: Cultural disconnection in school routines. Classroom discourse norms rarely leverage local sociocultural practices that could cultivate communal belonging (Wardani, 2015; Widiyawati, 2019). General solutions in the literature target (a) social climate and discourse norms (teacher immediacy, norms for respectful argumentation), (b) collaborative structures (cooperative learning, peer-led discussion protocols), and (c) community-building routines (icebreakers, peer feedback, reflective circles) shown to elevate presence and engagement across modalities (Garrison et al., 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Swan & Shih, 2005; Richardson et al., 2017; Li, 2022). However, generic solutions may underperform if they overlook learners' funds of knowledge and locally resonant interaction scripts.

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework posits that teaching presence and social presence jointly enable cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2000). Empirically, instructor behaviors (clear process design; facilitation of discourse; direct instruction) and structured peer interaction (roles, turn-taking, feedback) reliably heighten social presence and outcomes (Swan & Shih, 2005; Richardson et al., 2017). Meta-analytic work links higher social presence to stronger satisfaction and achievement across diverse settings (Richardson et al., 2017). In parallel, design research cautions that simply grouping students is insufficient; social affordances must be explicitly engineered to avoid "free-riding," cliques, or silence (Kreijns et al., 2003; Kreijns et al., 2011; Kreijns et al., 2022). Two additional strands are pertinent: Culturally responsive design. Integrating local norms and values into participation structures fosters belonging and prosocial norms, thereby amplifying social presence (Wardani, 2015; Widiyawati, 2019; Suryani, 2023; Lestari, 2022). Guidance and counseling modules. Structured small-group guidance (psychoeducation → modeling → role-play → feedback → home practice) can improve interpersonal competencies and confidence to speak up—proximal levers of social presence (Nabilah, Putri, Illahi, Fitri, & Yudiana, 2023). Instructional development studies using ADDIE show this model's suitability for creating context-fit modules and evaluating usability/learning effects (Setiyani, Putri, Ferdianto, & Fauji, 2020; Gunawan, Hidayat, Mulyati, & Persada, 2022). Synthesizing these strands suggests a culturally grounded group-guidance module that operationalizes Marung values (togetherness, reciprocity, openness, equality, empathy) into concrete interaction routines (e.g., equitable turn-taking "ronda bicara," appreciative listening stems, consensus-seeking "musyawarah" protocols) to grow social presence in a vocational high-school classroom.

Social presence has been theorized since Short et al. (1976) and elaborated in educational contexts via CoI (Garrison et al., 2000) and extended models emphasizing affective, interactive, and cohesive indicators (Swan & Shih, 2005; Whiteside, 2015). Measurement studies have refined instruments and clarified links to satisfaction and learning (Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Kreijns et al., 2011; Richardson et al., 2017). During and after COVID-19, studies reaffirmed social presence as a mediator between teaching design and cognitive engagement (Li, 2022) and documented positive associations with outcomes across digital education (Yergaliyeva, Bakić-Mirić, & Shayakhmetova, 2025). In Indonesia, scholarship on local wisdom (kearifan lokal) in character education and social cohesion argues that embedding

community values can strengthen pro-social behaviors and classroom climate (Wardani, 2015; Suryani, 2023; Lestari, 2022). Ethnographic and cultural-studies work in Paseban, Jember details Marung as a community practice of open dialogue, mutual help, and inclusive participation that historically served information literacy and collective problem-solving (Widiyawati, 2019). Yet, four gaps remain: Setting gap (VET): Most social-presence interventions are evaluated in higher education or general secondary settings; vocational high schools (SMK)—with their teamwork- and work-readiness imperatives—are under-studied (cf. Nabilah et al., 2023; Li, 2022; Richardson et al., 2017). Cultural grounding gap: Few interventions translate a specific Indonesian local tradition into actionable classroom discourse routines and then test effects on social presence (Wardani, 2015; Widiyawati, 2019; Suryani, 2023). Design-and-evidence gap: There is limited ADDIE-based development and validation of small-group guidance modules explicitly targeting social presence with pre–post evaluation in SMK contexts (Setiyani et al., 2020; Gunawan et al., 2022). Mechanism gap: While we know social presence correlates with outcomes, fewer studies trace how culturally anchored norms (e.g., equality in turn-taking, empathic listening) shift the affective/interactive/cohesive indicators that instruments capture (Kreijns et al., 2003; Kreijns et al., 2022; Whiteside, 2015).

This study aims to design, validate, and evaluate a group-guidance counseling module that integrates Marung cultural values to strengthen students' social presence in collaborative learning at SMK PGRI 5 Jember. Specifically, we (a) distill actionable Marung values into classroom interaction routines, (b) develop an ADDIE-based module and validate its content/media quality, and (c) assess changes in students' social presence using a structured pre–post design. We operationalize an Indonesian local tradition—Marung—into explicit participation scripts (e.g., equitable rounds, appreciative talk moves, consensus-seeking) that target the affective, interactive, and cohesive components of social presence (Whiteside, 2015; Kreijns et al., 2022; Widiyawati, 2019). We test this in a vocational high-school (SMK) context, a comparatively under-represented setting in social-presence intervention studies (Richardson et al., 2017; Nabilah et al., 2023). We combine module development (ADDIE) with empirical evaluation of social-presence shifts, addressing both design quality and learner impact (Setiyani et al., 2020; Gunawan et al., 2022). Hypothesis/Justification. Grounded in CoI theory and past empirical links among teaching presence, social presence, and outcomes, we hypothesize that a culturally grounded module will significantly increase students' social presence (Garrison et al., 2000; Swan & Shih, 2005; Richardson et al., 2017; Li, 2022). The mechanism is expected to run via improved belonging, equitable participation, and empathic peer feedback—core to Marung and to social-presence indicators (Whiteside, 2015; Kreijns et al., 2011; Widiyawati, 2019). Scope and Delimitations. The study is bounded to one SMK (PGRI 5 Jember) and focuses on Grade XI students in small-group guidance sessions embedded in regular lessons. The module addresses in-class social presence (affective/interactive/cohesive indicators) rather than broader socio-emotional competencies or long-term academic outcomes. While we draw on international instruments and theory (Short et al., 1976; Garrison et al., 2000; Kreijns et al., 2011; Richardson et al., 2017), adaptations are contextualized to Marung values and local discourse norms. Findings should thus be interpreted as context-specific design knowledge with potential for principled adaptation to other Indonesian locales with comparable communal practices.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study used a research-and-development (R&D) design with the ADDIE model—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—to produce and test a guidance & counseling module that integrates *Marung* cultural values (togetherness, openness, mutual help) to strengthen students' social presence in learning at SMK PGRI 5 Jember. The product trial employed a single-group pretest–posttest quasi-experimental approach to estimate change after exposure to the module (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The ADDIE pathway is appropriate for systematic educational product development and iterative validation (Branch, 2009; Molenda, 2003). The construct "social presence" and its behavioral indicators followed foundational and contemporary work (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Kreijns, Kirschner, Jochems, & van Buuren, 2011; Kreijns, Xu, & Weidlich, 2022),

including evidence that social presence links to learning engagement and outcomes (Li, 2022; Oktaviani, Anwar, & Santa, 2022; Nabilah et al., 2023).

Population and Sample / Participants

Setting. SMK PGRI 5 Jember (East Java, Indonesia), a vocational high school with programs such as Motorcycle Engineering, Accounting, and Office Management. Population and sampling. The target population comprised Grade XI students enrolled in the semester of data collection. Using practical constraints and the intervention's group-delivery nature, we applied purposive sampling to one intact class supported by school counselors. Following an a-priori power check for within-subjects designs (medium effect $d = 0.5$, $\alpha = .05$, power = .80), a minimum of $n \approx 27$ is adequate (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). We recruited 30 students (≈15–17 years) who met inclusion criteria (regular attendance; consent/assent; no concurrent psychological treatment) and had no exclusion criteria (e.g., severe communication disorders). Participant protections. Because participants are minors in a school context, parental/guardian consent and student assent were obtained; participation had no impact on grades or school standing.

Table 1. Participant profile (to be reported at baseline)

Characteristic	Level/Category	Notes
Sex	Female / Male	Count & %
Study Program	TSM / Accounting / Office Mgmt	Count & %
Age (years)	Mean ± SD	Range
Prior group-guidance experience	Yes / No	Count & %
Attendance during intervention	% sessions attended	Mean ± SD

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments. Data were gathered using four complementary tools: (a) a 25-item Social Presence Questionnaire (SPQ) adapted from validated constructs and indicators (Short et al., 1976; Kreijns, Kirschner, Jochems, & van Buuren, 2011; Kreijns, Xu, & Weidlich, 2022; Li, 2022; see also Nabilah et al., 2023), (b) an observation checklist to record interactional behaviors during group activities, (c) a session-fidelity checklist, and (d) brief post-session reflection prompts/interviews to capture feasibility and acceptability. The SPQ uses a 4-point Likert format (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree) across five domains aligned with social-presence theorization and CoI-style interpersonal dimensions—comfort in interaction (e.g., "I feel at ease sharing my views in group discussions"), active participation ("I respond to peers' ideas during tasks"), mutual respect and openness ("Peers and I listen and respond respectfully"), relational closeness/belonging ("I feel connected to my classmates during learning"), and empathy/supportive communication ("I try to understand peers' feelings when discussing")—and yields summed scores from 25 to 100 interpreted using the study's category thresholds (Short et al., 1976; Kreijns et al., 2011, 2022; Li, 2022). The observation sheet logs turn-taking, eye contact, on-task talk, constructive feedback, and supportive behaviors consistent with Marung values, while the 10-item fidelity checklist verifies dosage, sequence (psychoeducation → modeling → role-play → feedback → home practice), and counselor adherence. The counseling module itself comprises four small-group sessions (70–90 minutes each): Session 1 establishes a Marung mindset and psychological safety (norms, respectful-disagreement scripts, micro-skills demonstration); Session 2 uses role-plays on common school dilemmas (dominating peers, reluctance to speak, refusing unfair requests) supported by peer-coaching checklists; Session 3 engages collaborative problem-solving through mini-projects requiring inclusive participation and rotating roles; and Session 4 consolidates learning and plans transfer with action plans, digital boosters (short prompts), and peer accountability. This small-group format leverages normative feedback and observational learning typical in youth group work (Hoag & Burlingame, 1997) and employs brief scripts plus behavioral rehearsal to strengthen assertive, empathic communication (cf. Nabilah et al., 2023).

Table 2. Instrument blueprint

Indicator	Item count	Item IDs (examples)
Comfort in interaction	5	1, 6, 11, 16, 21
Active participation	5	2, 7, 12, 17, 22
Mutual respect & openness	5	3, 8, 13, 18, 23
Relational closeness/belonging	5	4, 9, 14, 19, 24
Empathy & supportive communication	5	5, 10, 15, 20, 25

Table 3. Score categories for SPQ

Total score	Category
25–43	Very low
44–62	Low
63–81	High
82–100	Very high

Procedures

The research procedures followed five sequential stages based on the ADDIE model. In the Analysis stage, classroom observations, teacher–student interviews, and literature reviews were conducted to diagnose the main issues—namely low student participation, passive classroom discussions, and weak social presence (Oktaviani et al., 2022; Kreijns et al., 2022; Widiyawati, 2019). During the Design stage, the researcher formulated learning objectives, prepared session scripts, and created instructional materials embedding Marung cultural values into interactive group activities. This stage also produced blueprints for the Social Presence Questionnaire (SPQ) and observational indicators (Setiyani, Putri, Ferdianto, & Fauji, 2020). The Development stage involved expert validation of both the module and instruments. A content expert in guidance and counseling and a media/design expert assessed relevance, clarity, and usability, with Aiken's V index calculated to determine the content validity of each item (Aiken, 1980, 1985). Feedback from both experts informed revisions to enhance content alignment and usability. The Implementation stage consisted of three sub-steps: (1) administering the SPQ as a pretest to establish baseline social presence levels, (2) conducting the intervention through four counseling sessions over two weeks, facilitated by a trained counselor using a fidelity checklist, and (3) performing a posttest and collecting reflective feedback from students and teachers to capture perceived changes in engagement and comfort. Finally, the Evaluation stage analyzed both quantitative (pre–post statistical comparison and reliability indices) and qualitative (field observations and reflective responses) data to determine the module's effectiveness and feasibility (Syuhada, Hidayat, Mulyati, & Giri Persada, 2023).

Data Analysis

Data analysis included several key phases. In the data preparation phase, SPQ responses were screened for completeness, with missing data under 5% imputed by person-mean within subscales when only one item was missing. Reverse-coded items, if any, were rescored before generating composite scores. The psychometric analysis assessed the instrument's reliability and item quality. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for the total scale and each subscale, with $\alpha \geq 0.70$ considered acceptable (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), while item–total correlations of $r \geq 0.30$ were used to retain items with satisfactory discrimination. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption checks were performed using the Shapiro–Wilk test and Q–Q plots to verify normality of difference scores, alongside visual inspection for outliers (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965). For the effectiveness test, paired-samples t-tests were employed when normality assumptions were met, complemented by Cohen's d effect size estimation (Cohen, 1988). When data violated normality, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was used, with matched-pairs rank-biserial r or $r = Z/\sqrt{N}$ serving as the effect size indicators (Wilcoxon, 1945; Conover, 1999). Additionally, the analysis included percentage gain and Hake's normalized gain ($\langle g \rangle$) for interpreting learning progress in educational terms (Hake, 1998). For qualitative analysis, student reflections and observation notes were coded deductively using five predetermined indicators—comfort in interaction, active participation, openness and respect, belongingness, and empathy.

Illustrative excerpts were incorporated to provide contextual understanding of the quantitative results, thus offering a comprehensive mixed-method interpretation of the effectiveness of Marung-based counseling in enhancing students' social presence.

Table 4. Analysis plan mapping

Research question	Measure(s)	Analysis
RQ1: Does social presence improve after the module?	SPQ total score (pre vs post)	Paired *t* or Wilcoxon; effect size (*d* or rank-biserial *r*)
RQ2: Which indicators shift most?	Five indicator subscores	Paired tests per subscore; Holm–Bonferroni correction
RQ3: Is the instrument reliable?	SPQ items	Cronbach's α; $r_{(it)}$
RQ4: Feasibility & acceptability	Reflections; fidelity; attendance	Descriptive stats; thematic coding; adherence %

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

To ensure measurement accuracy and procedural rigor, the study incorporated multiple forms of validity and reliability assessment alongside strong ethical safeguards. Content validity was evaluated by two qualified experts—one in guidance and counseling and another in educational media—who rated each item for relevance and clarity. The Aiken's V coefficient was computed for every item and indicator, accompanied by 95% confidence intervals; values of $V \geq 0.70$ were deemed acceptable for small expert panels (Aiken, 1985). To complement this, Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) was applied as a sensitivity check to confirm the essentiality of each item (Lawshe, 1975). Construct validity was established through theoretical alignment of items with five key indicators of social presence—comfort, participation, openness and respect, belonging, and empathy—anchored in both classical and contemporary frameworks (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Kreijns, Kirschner, Jochems, & van Buuren, 2011; Kreijns, Xu, & Weidlich, 2022). Convergent validity was also supported by field observations reflecting congruent behaviors such as on-task collaboration, reciprocal feedback, and empathic communication (Li, 2022). Reliability testing focused primarily on internal consistency and inter-rater agreement. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ($\alpha \geq 0.70$) confirmed satisfactory internal consistency across total and subscale scores (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). For observational data, when two raters independently coded student interactions, inter-rater reliability was quantified using Cohen's κ to ensure consistent scoring across observers (Cohen, 1960). To maintain internal validity, several potential design threats were carefully mitigated. History and maturation effects were controlled through a brief two-week intervention window and a stable instructional context. Testing and instrumentation effects were minimized by administering identical pretest and posttest instructions. Hawthorne and demand effects were addressed by normalizing classroom scripts, framing sessions as collaborative rather than evaluative, and emphasizing psychological safety with no academic grading implications. Fidelity of implementation was safeguarded through structured checklists, real-time monitoring, and detailed field notes recorded by observers throughout each session. Regarding external validity, this research was conducted in a single-site, intact-class setting, thus generalizability is naturally constrained to comparable vocational school environments. Future research is recommended to employ comparative or multi-site designs to strengthen transferability and ecological validity. From an ethical standpoint, the study adhered to institutional and school-level research protocols. Prior authorization was secured from both the university ethics committee and the SMK PGRI 5 Jember administration. Written parental consent and student assent were obtained, ensuring that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn without academic or social consequences. To protect confidentiality, all participant data were anonymized using numeric codes and stored in encrypted digital files accessible only to the research team. Results were reported in aggregate form without identifying information. All instructional and counseling activities were designed to be culturally sensitive, leveraging Marung values of togetherness and mutual respect in a positive manner while avoiding stereotyping or coercion (Widiyawati, 2019; Wardani, 2015; Akbar & Ansori, 2024). The intervention

posed minimal psychological risk, and any participants experiencing distress were promptly referred to the school counselor for additional support consistent with ethical standards in educational research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Across 30–40 Grade XI students at SMK PGRI 5 Jember, the Marung-values guidance module produced clear gains in students' *social presence* (SP). The class mean increased from 49.9% (pre-test; "low–moderate") to 77% (post-test; "high"), indicating stronger perceptions of being "psychologically present," connected, and engaged with peers during learning. A paired-samples test showed a significant pre–post difference ($p < .001$), supporting the a priori hypothesis that embedding locally rooted, prosocial cultural values (belonging/solidarity, open information exchange, trust/openness, equality/tolerance, empathy/care) would boost students' social presence. Expert validation judged the module "(Very) Feasible" on both content and media criteria (overall 83%–83.5%), and measurement quality was strong (25/25 items valid; Cronbach's $\alpha = .888$).

Table 5. Pre–post summary of social presence

Metric	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
Class mean (%)	49.9	77.0	+27.1
Category	Low–Moderate	High	↑
Statistical test	–	–	Paired t, $p < .001$

These findings align with Social Presence Theory—i.e., learners' felt "realness" and connectedness foster engagement and learning (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Rourke et al., 1999; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Biocca, Harms, & Burgoon, 2003; Kreijns et al., 2011, 2022; Richardson et al., 2017).

Belongingness & Social Solidarit

Observation notes and post-test items capturing *we-intentions*, mutual encouragement, and willingness to participate in group tasks all improved. Students who were initially passive began volunteering opinions and offering peer support—consistent with the Marung value of gotong royong (mutual aid). A stronger sense of community is a classic pathway from SP to engagement (Rovai, 2002; Shea & Bidjerano, 2009; Akyol & Garrison, 2008; Richardson et al., 2017). Group-based interventions that normalize participation and provide modeling/feedback reliably enhance prosocial participation (Swan & Shih, 2005; Lowenthal, 2010; Caskurlu et al., 2020). Theoretically, the results buttress Community of Inquiry (CoI) claims that SP is foundational to collaborative knowledge building (Garrison et al., 2000). Practically, they show that *locally meaningful* cultural frames can activate community norms that classrooms need but often lack.

Information Exchange & Social Literacy

Items on *sharing relevant information*, *responding to peers*, and *co-producing summaries* rose substantially. Students used Marung-style turn-taking and "cangkruk" (casual talk) to keep discussions flowing and inclusive. Social presence correlates with interaction volume and quality in blended/online contexts (Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Hostetter & Busch, 2006; Sung & Mayer, 2012; Weidlich & Bastiaens, 2018). The present gains echo that pattern in a face-to-face vocational setting when dialogic norms are culturally scaffolded. This theme provides a mechanism by which SP facilitates knowledge exchange and collective problem solving—a central goal in vocational education and teamwork-oriented workplaces.

Trust & Openness

Post-test indicators showed higher comfort disagreeing respectfully, self-disclosure, and asking for help—signs of psychological safety. Students reported feeling "heard" and "respected." Trust/openness are stable subdimensions of SP that predict satisfaction and perceived learning (Richardson & Swan, 2003; Baker, 2010; Lowenthal & Snelson, 2017; Richardson et al., 2017). CoI posits SP as a mediator

between teaching presence and cognitive presence (Akyol & Garrison, 2008; Shea & Bidjerano, 2009), consistent with our observed shifts. Psychological safety is a precondition for higher-order dialogue. Cultural scripts that legitimize candid, courteous talk can be a low-cost lever to cultivate it.

Equality & Tolerance

Participation became more evenly distributed; fewer "dominant voices," more first-time speakers. Students referenced "setara" (equal) norms promoted in the module. Inclusive norms attenuate status effects and support equitable discourse, a recognized challenge in group learning (Caspi & Blau, 2008; Kreijns et al., 2011; Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012; Caskurlu et al., 2020). For vocational tracks, broad participation is not only a fairness issue but also a work-readiness skill (communication, teamwork).

Empathy & Social Care

Students more frequently checked peers' understanding, paraphrased others' ideas, and offered emotional validation. Post-test items on *empathic listening* rose. Empathic communication is a repeated correlate of SP and satisfaction (Whiteside, 2015; Richardson et al., 2017; Lowenthal, 2014). It enriches *cognitive presence* by sustaining dialogue during conflict or confusion (Garrison et al., 2000). Empathy underwrites pro-social climates—a critical protective factor for persistence, especially for students who are typically quiet or at risk of disengagement.

Measurement Quality: Validity & Reliability

All 25 items met the validity threshold ($r_{item} > r_{table} = .361$), and internal consistency was high ($\alpha = .888$), ensuring stable measurement of SP subdimensions (Kreijns et al., 2011; DeVellis, 2017).

Table 6. Instrument quality

Property	Result	Interpretation
Items valid	25 / 25	Content captured intended construct
r_item (min–max)	.388 – .602	All > .361 (acceptable)
Cronbach's α	.888	High internal consistency

Feasibility & Acceptability (Expert Validation)

Content and media experts rated the module 83%–83.5% (Layak–Sangat Layak). Strengths: cultural authenticity, clear structure, readable language, and usable visuals. Suggested refinements: add more varied examples and a few additional images for visual appeal.

Table 7. Expert validation—content

Dimension	Mean %	Category
Goal alignment	86	SL
Fit to SP indicators	82	L
Structure & flow	84	SL
Cultural integration	88	SL
Language clarity	80	L
Visual appeal	79	L
Overall	83	L/SL

Table 8. Expert validation—media

Dimension	Mean %	Category
Layout/typography	85	SL
Image–content fit	82	L
Consistency	84	SL
Clarity of presentation	83	L
Appeal/interactivity	81	L

Dimension	Mean %	Category
Ease of use	86	SL
Overall	83.5	L/SL

The intervention significantly raised SP overall and on each thematic sub-domain, as hypothesized. Gains in *open disagreement* and *self-disclosure* were positive but comparatively smaller than gains in *solidarity* and *information exchange*. In cultures emphasizing harmony, assertive dissent often requires longer habituation (Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Lowenthal, 2010). A plausible pathway is: Marung norms → psychological safety → increased reciprocal talk → elevated social presence → more equitable participation. This is coherent with CoI's teaching→social→cognitive chain (Akyol & Garrison, 2008; Shea & Bidjerano, 2009) and with meta-analytic evidence linking SP with satisfaction and perceived learning (Richardson et al., 2017; Caskurlu et al., 2020). A small subset of students remained quiet in whole-class plenaries but participated actively in micro-groups. This suggests group size and audience design matter for SP expression (Swan & Shih, 2005; Lowenthal & Snelson, 2017). Rotating roles (moderator, summarizer) may further distribute voice. Convergent evidence from (i) significant pre–post gains, (ii) expert validation, and (iii) reliable measurement supports the result pattern. Limitations. (a) Single-site, non-random sample; (b) no control group—cannot fully rule out maturation/teacher effects; (c) self-report SP without behavioral logging; (d) short follow-up—durability unknown. Future studies should employ quasi-experimental/RCT designs across multiple vocational schools, blend observational/discourse analytics, and include follow-up checkpoints.

Implications

The findings extend Social Presence Theory by demonstrating that culturally situated norms—specifically Marung—can activate social-presence mechanisms in face-to-face vocational classrooms, not only in technology-mediated environments (Short et al., 1976; Garrison et al., 2000; Kreijns et al., 2022). Practically, teachers can weave these norms into daily routines by embedding cultural scripts for orderly turn-taking, respectful disagreement, and mutual aid; structuring learning in small groups with rotating roles to distribute voice; and supplying sentence stems plus peer-feedback checklists to rehearse empathic and assertive communication, all while aligning activities with school counseling goals and work-readiness competencies. At the policy level, schools and districts can recognize local cultural capital as a lever for collaboration and wellbeing, allocate protected time for structured group guidance, and include social-presence–aligned indicators in school-climate monitoring. For research, promising directions include testing key moderators (e.g., gender, vocational track, prior shyness), comparing culturally framed interventions with generic social-skills training, and tracing downstream outcomes of social presence—such as collaborative problem-solving performance and attendance—to clarify mechanisms and durability of effects.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to develop and test the effectiveness of a guidance–counseling module grounded in local Marung values (collectivism/solidarity, information exchange/literacy, trust–openness, tolerance–equity, empathy–care) to enhance students' social presence at SMK PGRI 5 Jember. Following the intervention, mean social-presence scores increased from 49.9% (low–moderate) at pretest to 77% (high) at posttest, a statistically significant gain (paired-samples t-test, $p < .05$); classroom observations corroborated these outcomes through more even participation (reduced dominance by one or two students), greater willingness to voice opinions, and stronger peer support, while expert appraisal rated the module "Appropriate–Highly Appropriate" with an average validity/feasibility score of ≈83%. Theoretically, the study extends Social Presence scholarship by demonstrating a culturally rooted mechanism that strengthens social connectedness in vocational settings; practically, it offers a ready-to-adopt four-phase protocol for school counselors (psychoeducation → modeling → role-play → feedback & home practice); and at the policy level, it provides a rationale for schools and local authorities to embed local cultural values into guidance programs, strengthen school culture, and operationalize the Merdeka Curriculum to foster inclusive, collaborative, and character-building learning climates.

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