Navigating Diversity: The Emotional Toll and Educational Imperatives of Student Social Interaction in Multicultural Campuses

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ABSTRACT

In multicultural and multilingual societies, understanding communication dynamics and their impacts is crucial. This study explores the management of communication and social interactions among university students within academic and social contexts. Employing a questionnaire survey method, the research analyses students' lived experiences concerning communication and social interaction on campus, encompassing their engagement with peers, lecturers, and staff. Specifically, the study focuses on the students' experience of negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, and disappointment and examines the strategies they employ to address these issues. Additionally, the research investigates the role of social support from friends, family, and the surrounding environment in overcoming communication problems. The study also evaluates the impact of negative emotions on students' academic performance and social life and identifies the perceived needs for communication education and social interaction skills among students. Based on a survey of 126 students, the study finds that most respondents have experienced negative emotions that negatively affect their social and academic lives. The results also indicate that, although most students have received some form of communication training, there remains a need for more comprehensive communication education, particularly in verbal communication, public speaking, and communication ethics. These findings highlight the importance of developing a more effective communication curriculum to enhance the quality of social interactions on campus.

Keywords: communication breakdown, communication strategies, interpersonal communication, multicultural campus, negative emotion, social interaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country known for its diverse population, consisting of various ethnic groups spread across its islands. With this diversity comes a rich tapestry of languages used in daily conversations, known as regional languages or dialects. Indonesia's linguistics landscape is incredibly varied. Data from Centre for Language and Literature Development and Protection, Language Development Agency of Indonesia shows that there are more than 700 regional languages in Indonesia (Badan Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, 2020). Some of the most widely spoken regional languages include Javanese Sundanese, Balinese, Madurese, and Batak. These languages are not only spoken, as a means of communication within families, and social groups, but also serve as markers of cultural identity and heritage for their respective communities such as to help preserve local traditions, stories, and customs.

In addition to using regional languages, Indonesian also use Bahasa Indonesia or Indonesian. Bahasa Indonesia, the national language of Indonesia, serves as a unifying force that brings together individuals from different regions and backgrounds. Bahasa Indonesia is the language of administration, education, and communication across the archipelago. Not only do

Indonesians speak their regional language and Bahasa Indonesia, but some Indonesian, especially the educated ones, can communicate using other foreign languages as well, such as English, Mandarin, Arabic, and others. Therefore, Indonesia can be said to be a multi-cultural as well as multi-lingual country.

In a narrower context, the major cities in Indonesia are also multi-cultural as well as multi-lingual cities. Many people from various regions in Indonesia come to various big cities, such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Makassar, and others for various purposes such as working, doing business, travelling, and pursuing education, especially higher education. Consequently, for an even narrower scope, university, including the Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology, Campus in the city of Surabaya, East Java, is also a multi-cultural and multi-lingual place.

The University campus serves as a microcosm of a larger societal structure, encapsulating the diverse elements of a community within its boundaries. Within this environment, a heterogeneous population, comprised of individuals fulfilling distinct professional roles and functions –including faculty members, administrative personnel, and students – engage in regular interactions. These individuals originate from a multiplicity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, contributing to rich tapestry of social exchange. While formal interactions are predominantly conducted in the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, reflecting its status as the lingua franca for official discourse, informal communicative exchanges often exhibit a preference for local vernacular. Specifically, in ITS, Javanese is frequently employed in casual settings, illustrating the interplay between national and local linguistic practices within the campus community. This linguistic duality underscores the campus's role as a site where national integration and regional culture preservation coexist and interact.

Language, functioning as the primary instrument of communicative exchange, maintains an intrinsic and profound relationship with culture. It serves as a mirror reflecting the cultural ethos, encapsulating the values, worldviews, and collective experiential history of a given cultural group. Moreover, language constitutes a complex systemic framework that embodies cognitive processes, affective states, and interpersonal interactional patterns. Consequently, communicative and interactive modalities exert a discernible influence on the psychological and emotional states of the participants involved. Within the context of campus social and academic interactions, students are particularly susceptible to experiencing intercultural dissonances, which may precipitate psychological and emotional disturbances. Therefore, this study aims to delineate the spectrum of negative emotions encountered by students during campus social interactions, analyse their consequential impacts, and underscore the imperative for students to cultivate enhanced social interaction and communication strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiculturalism is described as the coexistence of various cultures, where culture refers to ethnic, social, or cultural communities and is expressed by customary practices, cultural assumptions and values, thought habits, and communication styles (Datta, Rimmi & Mete, 2021). Multiculturalism is a multicultural position to answer related differences with race, socio-economic class, gender, language, culture, gender, and disability. Intercultural competence and understanding are important because they enable us to address the underlying causes of some of the most severe issues facing modern societies, such as racism, hate speech, discrimination, and misunderstandings that cut across cultural, sociocultural, and ethnic boundaries (Huber et al., 2012).

Goh and Silver (2004), cited by Nurakhir (Nurakhir, 2016), define multilingualism as a condition in which there are several languages spoken in a society. Additionally, some people

describe multilingualism as the usage of multiple languages by a person, either individually or collectively. Communication between interlocutors with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds is necessary for multilingualism. Additionally, multilingualism necessitates the use of media (email, video, telephone, and face-to-face), modes (written, spoken, and visual), and techniques (diction, tone) to convey meaning.

However, not every member of a society is proficient in the multiple languages spoken there and utilizes them for communication. People in that civilization will always use the languages that are currently in use, albeit with varying degrees of proficiency. Some individuals are extremely proficient in a certain language, whereas others are not proficient in it or are unable to use it at all. As a result, speaking one's mother tongue is crucial to a community or tribe's sense of identity. Students frequently employ their mother tongue in academic settings when participating in discussions both inside and outside of the classroom. In this case, speaking in their home tongue will facilitate their ability to communicate their ideas and thoughts clearly and assist them in comprehending the problems that come up throughout the conversation (Nurakhir, 2016). The way kids communicate on a regular basis, particularly with their family and close friends, has a big impact on situations like these.

As social beings, humans are inherently inclined to engage with others and live in communities (Avitasari et al., 2023). Humans require other people to meet physically and psychologically since they cannot live alone. In order to support and collaborate with one another, humans require other individuals to create friendships, families, and communities. To meet this objective, everyone should be able to communicate and interact with others. Communication and social skills play an important role in daily life that affects relationships, interactions, and overall human well-being (Everyday speech, 2024). It is believed that communication skills and social skills are the foundation of successful interaction because of their very fundamental roles of expressing thoughts and emotions, understanding others, and building relationships with others.

Social interactions occur when people interact with one another, both individually and collectively. Social touch and communication are essentially what lead to social interactions. The most crucial and efficient means of communicating ideas, sentiments, and information to other people is through communication. Proficiency in both verbal and nonverbal language usage is intimately linked to communication. Language usage is intimately tied to the social and cultural values of language users. Understanding how each speaker uses the language can make it easier for people to interact, communicate, and comprehend the topic of the conversation. In addition to the use of verbal and non-verbal language, communication activities also involve active listening skills and the use of clear expressions (Everyday speech, 2024).

As a communication tool, language and culture are closely related. Language reflects the soul of a culture that shows the values, views, and collective experiences of a society. Language is a complex system that reflects the way of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world of a group of people. Therefore, the way people communicate and interact with others will have a certain impact on the speakers, particularly mental health and well-being.

World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being wherein individual knows their capabilities and use them effectively for their communities (Villeza, 2023). The definition implies that mental health is not only about the absence of mental illness, but a positive state of well-being as well. Student well-being has become a key concern in higher education, as highlighted by (Douwes et al., 2023), its significant influence on students' emotions and engagement in their studies. Research consistently shows that students struggling with low well-being are more likely to experience negative psychological effects, such as decreased satisfaction with their personal and academic lives, reduced self-confidence (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2022), depression (Gilman & Huebner, 2006), and feelings of

hopelessness (Majumdar & Ray, 2010). Tragically, it can also be linked to non-suicidal self-harm and suicidal thoughts (Bantjes et al., 2023).

Negative emotion refers to a generalized tendency towards experiencing negative feelings such as anger, hostility, depression, grief, and anxiety (Bishop, 2001). While Geng et al categorizes depression, anxiety, and stress as typical of negative emotion (Geng et al., 2020). Negative emotions which are associated with mental health may be caused by poor communication. When poor communication occurs, people usually feel, among others, frustrated, anxious, lonely, upset, distant, confused, misunderstood, invalidated, and neglected. People should not experience negative emotions for a long time and repeatedly because it will have an impact on overall mental health. Therefore, students need to have a support system in the form of social support from friends, peers, teachers, and staff. Social support has a very important role in a person's mental well-being. Social support from family, friends, and the community can help reduce stress and depression levels. People who feel supported tend to have better coping mechanisms and are better able to face life's challenges.

3.   METHODS

3.1 Research Design
The research aimed to describe the students' negative emotions experienced during social interaction in the academic setting, their impact, the strategies for managing these emotions, and the expectations surrounding communication skills that students required. To provide a clear description of these aspects, a descriptive quantitative method was employed. This approach is particularly effective for summarizing and analysing numerical data to identify patterns and trends within a surveyed population (McCaffrey, 2023). Furthermore, the descriptive quantitative method facilitates a structured and objective assessment, allowing researchers to adequately address the research questions and derive generalizable findings and implications concerning the issues studied. This approach involves using statistical tools to describe the characteristics of a group or phenomenon, often by analysing data collected through surveys, questionnaires, or experiments (Unimrkt, 2023).

3.2 Data Collection
3.2.1 Population and Sample
This research was carried out on the campus of the Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology (ITS) Surabaya with ITS students as the population. The sample research is students who are willing to voluntarily fill out a questionnaire. A total of 126 students were willing to fill in questions. During the screening process, ten responses were found to be incomplete, as some questions were left unanswered. These were excluded, resulting a final sample of 116 respondents.

3.2.2 Survey method
The data for the research was collected through survey using questionnaire. There are eight questions in the survey comprising three questions about the respondents' identity such as age, sex, and semester of their study. The other five questions are open-ended questions asking especially respondents' experiences in relation to the social interactions and communication with the lecturers, staff, and other students during their study in campus. The students were free to elaborate their answers to the responding questions. The questionnaire was created using Google form and the respondents could access the form via link shared in WhatsApp.

3.3 Data Analysis and Presentation
The data obtained from the Google form questionnaire was then downloaded and transferred to MS Excel spreadsheet. The raw data from each open-ended question was then grouped and assigned with codes based on the commonness of the answers for further easy analysis. The data

analysis was done using SPSS 23 software to get the statistical description (descriptive statistics) in terms of frequencies of the variables represented in percentage.

4.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results
4.1.1   Respondents' Demographic information and negative emotion experience

Table 1 provides a demographic overview of the respondents alongside data on their experience of negative emotions. 116 participating respondents provides complete answers to all questions in the survey. In terms of age distribution, the majority of participants were either 19 or 20 years old, each group comprising 33.6% of the sample (n=39). A substantial proportion was also 21 years old (26.7%, n=31). Regarding sex, the sample exhibited a slight gender imbalance, with males constituting 56.0% of the respondents (n=65) and females comprising 44.0% (n=51). The distribution across academic semesters reveals that the majority of respondents (62.9%, n=73) were in their third semester of study. A notable portion was also in their fifth semester (33.6%, n=39). Concerning the experience of negative emotions, a significant majority of the respondents (78.4%, n=91) reported having experienced negative emotions. Conversely, a smaller proportion (21.6%, n=25) indicated that they had not experienced negative emotions.

The demographic data indicates that the sample is largely composed of students in the early stages of their university experience, with a slight male majority. The overwhelmingly high percentage of respondents reporting the experience of negative emotions underscores the pertinence of investigating the management, impact, and communicative aspects associated with these emotions within the university context. This finding establishes the relevance and necessity of further exploring the students' experiences with negative emotions in relation to their social interactions and communication within the academic environment.

Table 1 Demographic description and negative emotion experience of the respondents

Description		n (%)
Age	18	2 (1.7)
	19	39 (33.6)
	20	39 (33.6)
	21	31 (26.7)
	22	4 (3.4)
	23	1 (0.9)
Sex	Male	65 (56.0)
	Female	51 (44.0)
Semester	3	73 (62.9)
	5	39 (33.6)
	6	1 (0.9)
	7	3 (2.6)
Negative emotion experience	Yes	91 (78.4)
	No	25 (21.6)

4.1.2 *The impact of emotion experience*

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of negative emotions on their study and social interactions. The data reveals that a substantial majority of those who reported experiencing negative emotions (as indicated in Table 1) perceived these emotions as having a negative impact on their study and social interactions. Specifically, 67 respondents representing 73.6% of those who experienced negative emotions, affirmed a negative impact. Conversely, a smaller proportion, 24 respondents (26.4%) of those who experienced negative emotions, reported that these feelings did not negative affect their study and social interactions.

Table 2 The impact on study and social interaction

Description		n (%)
Impact	Yes	67(73.6)
	No	24(26.4)

The significant percentage of students indicating a negative impact underscores the potential detrimental role of negative emotions in their academic engagement and social interaction within university environment. This finding highlights the importance of understanding how these emotions manifest, how students manage them, and what support mechanisms might be beneficial in mitigating their adverse effects on students' overall university experience. The fact that nearly three-quarters of students experiencing negative emotions perceive a negative impact on key aspects of their university life further emphasizes the need for interventions and resources aimed at fostering emotional well-being and effective coping strategies among the student population.

4.1.3 The Management

Table 3 provides data about the students' management of negative emotions and communication. Based on the data, there are different ways how respondents handled the negative emotions. This table presents four items related to the management of negative emotions and communication, namely how the respondent responded the negative emotions due to interlocutors' language and expressions, social supports the respondent have, the communication skills respondent received during their study, and the respondents' strategies to maintain relationships.

Table 3 The respondents' negative emotion and communication management

Description		n (%)
Response	Countering	12 (13.2)
	Neglecting	28 (30.8)
	Self-introspecting	49 (53.8)
	Attention diverting	2 (2.2)
Social support	Yes	73 (80.2)
	No	18 (19.8)
Communication skills provision	Yes	81 (89.0)
	No	10 (11.0)
Strategies to maintain relationships	Greeting	30 (33.0)
	Behaving well	41(45.1)
	Maintaining relationships	20 (22.0)

4.1.3.1 Respondents' Response to the Negative Emotions

Regarding the management of negative emotions, data Table 3 indicates that the most prevalent response reported by students was "Self-introspecting," chosen by the majority of respondents (53.8%) who experienced negative emotions. "Neglecting" the emotions was the second most common response, reported by 28 respondents (30.8%). "Countering" the negative emotions was employed by 12 respondents (13.2%), while "Attention diverting" was the least frequent strategy, chosen by only 2 respondents (2.2%). This suggests a tendency among students to primarily engage in internal reflection when dealing with negative emotions, with a notable proportion also choosing to ignore these feelings.

4.1.3.2 Social Supports

In terms of social support, data in Table 3 shows that a significant majority of respondents who experienced negative emotions, 73 respondents (80.2%), reported that they have utilized social support to cope. Conversely, a smaller proportion of respondents, (19.8% or 18 respondents) reported not relying on social support.

The fact highlights that social networks and interpersonal connections play a crucial role in emotional coping mechanisms. It highlights the importance of fostering environments that encourage social support, such as peer relationships, mentorship programs, and counselling services. On the other side, small number of respondents who did not rely on social support could suggest barriers such as social stigma, lack of accessible support systems, or personal preferences for dealing with emotions independently. These insights underline the need to identify and address factors that might hinder students from seeking or benefitting from social support.

4.1.3.3 Communication Skills Provision

Concerning the provision of communication skills training, data in Table 3 exhibits that a significant majority of respondents (89.0%, n=81) reported having received some form of communication skill provision during their initial study time. This provision may include training, workshops, or courses that focus on developing effective communication skills. Meanwhile, only a small minority of respondents (11.0%, n=10) indicated that they did not receive the training. The fact suggests that the university or other sources have provided communication skills education to a large segment of the student population.

4.1.3.4 Strategies to Maintain Relationships
Regarding strategies to maintain relationships, data in Table 3 shows various strategies used by students to maintain their relationships. "Behaving well" was the most frequently reported strategy by the majority of respondents (45.1%, n=41). This indicates that positive and polite behaviour is highly valued in social interactions. This includes polite behaviour, respecting others, and showing a positive attitude in everyday interactions. "Greeting" was considered important by 30 respondents (33.0%), indicating that small actions such as greeting can have a big impact on maintaining relationships. Next, "Maintaining relationships" was preferred by 20 respondents (22.0%). The fact suggests that students prioritize positive conduct and basic social courtesies in their efforts to sustain interpersonal connections.

The insights from the findings suggest that while students primarily manage negative emotions through introspection, a strong reliance on social support exists. The high rate of reported communication skills provision may indicate an institutional effort to equip students with relevant competencies. Furthermore, the emphasis on positive interpersonal behaviour as a relationship maintenance strategy underscores the students' awareness of social norms in fostering connections.

4.1.4 The Communication Skills Needed

Table 4 identifies the different forms of communication skills that students consider important. Most respondents (47.3%, n=43) considered general "Communication skills" to be the most important, indicating that the ability to communicate clearly and effectively is a top priority for students. "Public speaking" skills were also considered important communication skill by 30.8% of respondents (n=28), indicating the need to be able to speak in front of an audience with confidence. "Ethics and manners" as well as "Interpersonal skills" were also recognized as important, albeit by a smaller percentage of respondents, (14.3%, n=13) and (7.7%, n=7) respectively.

Table 4 Communication skills needed

Description	n (%)

	Ethics and manners	13 (14.3)
Communication skills needed	Communication skills	43 (47.3)
	Public speaking skills	28 (30.8)
	Interpersonal skills	7 (7.7)

The prominence of "Communication skills" as a general requirement suggests that students recognize a broad need for improvement in their overall communicative abilities. The substantial emphasis on "Public speaking" skills likely reflects the academic and professional demands that often require effective oral presentation. The recognition of "Ethics and manners" underscores an awareness of the importance of socially appropriate and responsible communication. The comparatively lower demand for "Interpersonal skills" might suggest that students feel relatively more confident in this area compared to more formal communication contexts like public, or that they perceive the other categories as encompassing key aspects of interpersonal effectiveness.

Overall, this table shows that college students recognize different aspects of communication skills as essential to their academic and professional success. The main focus is on general communication and public speaking skills, which reflects the need to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts.

4.2 Discussion

The demographic profile of the participant sample, characterized by students in the early stages of their university experience and a slight male majority, provides a foundational context for interpreting the subsequent findings. Notably, the overwhelmingly high incidence of reported negative emotional experiences underscores the salience of investigating the management, impact, and communicative dimensions of these emotions within the university context, aligning with the growing scholarly attention on student well-being in higher education (Douwes et al., 2023). This prevalence establishes the pertinence of further exploring the intricate relationship between students' negative emotions and their social interactions and communication within the academic milieu.

The significant proportion of students indicating a negative impact of these emotions on their academic engagement and social interactions corroborates existing literature highlighting the detrimental consequences of diminished well-being, including decreased satisfaction and reduced self-confidence (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2022). This finding emphasizes the critical need to understand the manifestation of these emotions and the support mechanisms that could effectively mitigate their adverse effects on students' overall university experience. The overwhelmingly high incidence of reported negative emotions (78.4%) underscores the significant presence of affective challenges within this student population. This finding aligns with existing literature on students' mental health, which indicates that the transition to university life and the academic demands can be significant sources of stress and negative emotional experiences.

Regarding the management of negative emotions, the predominance of self-introspection as the primary coping mechanism, alongside a notable tendency to neglect these feelings, warrants further consideration in light of the literature emphasizing the benefits of social support for mental well-being (Villeza, 2023). While internal reflection may serve as an initial response, the limited utilization of other strategies, such as countering or attention diversion, suggests a potential gap in students' repertoire of emotion regulation techniques. Conversely, the substantial reliance on social support reported by a significant majority of students underscores the vital role of social networks and interpersonal connections in their emotional coping processes, reinforcing the literature's assertion of its positive impact on mental health. However,

the smaller segment of students who did not utilize social support necessitates further investigation into potential barriers hindering access or the inclination to seek such support.

The finding that a large majority of students reported receiving communication skills training during their initial study period indicates a proactive institutional approach to equipping students with relevant competencies, aligning with the fundamental role of communication and social skills in successful interaction (Everyday speech, 2024). However, the persistent prevalence of negative emotions despite this provision suggests that the existing training may not adequately address the specific challenges arising within a multicultural and potentially multilingual academic environment. This observation points to a potential disconnect between general communication skills instruction and the nuanced demands of intercultural competence (Huber et al., 2012) and the complexities of multilingual communication (Nurakhir, 2016).

In terms of relationship maintenance, the emphasis on positive interpersonal behaviours such as "behaving well" and "greeting" as key strategies highlights students' awareness of social norms in fostering connections. This aligns with the understanding that communication and social skills form the bedrock of successful relationships (Everyday speech, 2024) and underscores the importance of basic social courtesies in navigating interpersonal interactions.

Finally, the perceived importance of general "Communication skills" and "Public speaking" among students reflects their recognition of these abilities for academic and professional success. However, the comparatively lower emphasis on "Ethics and manners" and Interpersonal skills" may indicate an area where further integration within communication skills training could be beneficial, particularly within a multicultural context where diverse cultural assumptions and communication styles necessitate a heightened awareness of ethical considerations and refined interpersonal competencies (Everyday speech, 2024; Huber et al., 2012)

4.3 Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study is expected to contribute to the existing theory of communications by synthesizing the constitutive roles of multicultural and multilingual dynamics in the formation of students' interpersonal relationships and communicative practices, particularly within the academic environment. The empirical findings of this investigation may enrich the discourse on intercultural communication and social interaction. Furthermore, the research findings will furnish pertinent information to relevant stakeholders, including university administrators and educators regarding the necessity to provide inclusive support systems that address the unique communication challenges faced by students in multicultural settings to enhance students' social interaction and communication. Ultimately, such interventions are posited to positively influence students' overall well-being and academic performance.

5. CONCLUSION

This research investigated the challenges encountered by students within a multicultural academic environment, recognizing their pivotal role in campus social and academic interactions. The findings revealed that students experience negative emotions during social interactions and communication with peers, lecturers, and staff. Notably, a significant proportion of both male and female students reported these negative emotions despite having received training in the early parts of their study to enhance their communication skills. This suggests that while foundational knowledge of communication skills is beneficial, its effective application necessitates a nuanced understanding of situational contexts, cultural factors, and the emotional sensitivities of

individuals involved in campus interactions. Consequently, ongoing initiatives are crucial to cultivate students' awareness of the significance of adaptive communication skills through targeted training programs. Furthermore, the provision of robust social support networks involving friends and family is essential for mitigating and addressing the potential adverse effects of negative emotions.

Contribution of the research: This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by empirically demonstrating the prevalence of negative emotional experiences among students in a multicultural academic setting. It underscores the limitation of solely providing knowledge and highlights the critical need for a more holistic approach that integrates contextual awareness, cultural competence, and emotional intelligence in communication skills development within higher education.

Areas of further research: Building upon these findings, future research should prioritize in-depth explorations of interpersonal communication dynamics specifically within multicultural and multilingual academic environments. This includes investigating the specific cultural and linguistic nuances that contribute to communication challenges and the development of effective intervention strategies tailored to these complexities. Longitudinal studies could also examine the long-term impact of communication skills training and social support on students' emotional well-being and academic success in diverse campus settings.

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