
The Role of Communication Interaction Within the Regional Organization of the North Sumatra Student Association in Alleviating Homesickness Experiences Among New Migrant Students

Ahmad Zainul Umam Noor^{1*}, Sri Wahyuningsih², Rofina Rosyada³, R.Aj Rizqia Anisa Putri⁴, Wahyu Abdillah⁵, Mohammad Khoirul Mahfud⁶

1,2,3,4,5,6 Universitas Trunojoyo Madura, Jawa Timur, Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding author: zainulumam497@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study explores the role of communication interactions within the Ikatan Mahasiswa Sumatera Utara (IKAMASU) regional student organization in alleviating homesickness among first-year migrant students at Universitas Trunojoyo Madura. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected from purposively selected first-year North Sumatran students and organizational administrators through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation; data were analyzed following a Moustakas-inspired phenomenological procedure with method triangulation to ensure credibility. Findings show that IKAMASU functions as a family-like social space where intensive verbal exchanges (often in regional language), supportive nonverbal behaviors (open posture, empathic gestures), senior-member mentoring, and continuous digital communication together create emotional security and a sense of belonging. These communication processes reduce loneliness, normalize homesickness as a shared experience, and facilitate students' psychological and social adaptation to campus life. The study concludes that structured, identity-based peer interaction within regional student organizations constitutes an effective social-support mechanism for mitigating homesickness and improving early university adjustment; universities should recognize and strengthen such community networks as part of student well-being initiatives.

Keywords– Homesickness; Social Support; Communication Interaction; Regional Student Organization; Student Adaptation.



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1. Introduction

Migrant students are a group that experience a complex transition when entering higher education. This transition involves not only academic adjustment, but also social, cultural, and emotional adaptation as a result of relocation from their home environment to a new setting. One psychological condition commonly experienced by migrant students, particularly during the early phase of university life, is homesickness. Homesickness refers to emotional discomfort characterized by longing for home and family, feelings of loneliness, and difficulties in adjusting to a new environment (Aprillia, 2022). If not properly managed, homesickness can negatively affect students' psychological well-being and academic concentration.

Universitas Trunojoyo Madura (UTM) accommodates students from various regions in Indonesia, including those from North Sumatra. The long geographical distance from home, cultural differences, and limited social networks in the new environment place first-year migrant students in a vulnerable emotional position. Research shows that homesickness has a significant impact on the mental well-being of migrant students, causing anxiety, emotional distress, and concentration problems during the adaptation process (Afrilia et al., 2024). Therefore, the availability of social support systems is crucial in helping migrant students cope with emotional challenges during the early stages of their studies.

One important form of social support for migrant students is region-based student organizations, commonly referred to as regional student organizations (Organda). These organizations function as social spaces that bring together students with similar cultural and regional backgrounds, facilitating adaptation and fostering a sense of togetherness. The Ikatan Mahasiswa Sumatera Utara (IKAMASU) at Universitas Trunojoyo Madura serves as a social and emotional support platform for migrant students from North Sumatra. Through both formal and informal activities, IKAMASU members engage in continuous communication interactions that help build emotional closeness among members.

Communication interaction plays a vital role in strengthening social relationships and emotional support within student communities. Through interaction, individuals are able to share experiences, express emotions, and develop mutual understanding that supports social adaptation. In the context of migrant students, supportive communication within peer groups helps reduce feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation, which are closely related to homesickness (Yang & Di, 2021). Interaction within student organizations enables migrant students to feel accepted, understood, and emotionally supported in their new environment.

Previous studies have examined homesickness and adaptation among migrant students from various perspectives. (Asdhar & Suryanto, 2024) found that social interaction, communication with peers and family, and active involvement in campus organizations are key strategies for coping with homesickness during the early period of university life. However, most existing studies focus on individual coping strategies or psychological impacts, while limited attention has been given to how communication interactions within regional student organizations function as structured social support systems.

Based on this research gap, the present study focuses on the role of communication interaction within the IKAMASU regional student organization in alleviating homesickness among first-year migrant students at Universitas Trunojoyo Madura. This study aims to explore how communication interactions within IKAMASU contribute to emotional support, a sense of togetherness, and a sense of belonging. The findings are expected to contribute to communication studies, particularly organizational and social communication, by highlighting the role of regional student organizations in supporting the emotional adaptation of migrant students.

2. Method

This research was conducted at Universitas Trunojoyo Madura, focusing on the Regional Student Organization Ikatan Mahasiswa Sumatera Utara

(IKAMASU). The study was carried out in 2025 and involved IKAMASU administrators and new migrant students as the research subjects.

The method used in this study is divided into three stages, namely the preparation, implementation, and analysis stages. As stated by Hadiyati et al. (2017), the stages of conducting scientific research consist of the planning stage, implementation stage, and evaluation stage. The preparation stage includes determining the research focus, developing interview guidelines, and conducting initial observations. The implementation stage involves data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation related to communication interactions within IKAMASU. The analysis stage consists of data processing, result interpretation, and report preparation.

3. Result and Discussion

Result

The research findings indicate that communication interactions within the Regional Student Organization of the Ikatan Mahasiswa Sumatera Utara (IKAMASU) play an important role in helping first-year migrant students alleviate feelings of homesickness. Based on in-depth interviews and observations, first-year students utilize communication interactions as a medium to express feelings of longing for their families, anxiety during the adaptation process, and emotional pressure resulting from being in a new social and cultural environment.

IKAMASU is perceived as a social space with a familial atmosphere. Intensive interactions among first-year students, senior members, and organizational administrators provide a sense of security and psychological comfort. First-year students feel accepted and supported, allowing them to perceive homesickness not merely as a personal burden but as a shared experience commonly faced by migrant students.

The forms of communication interaction identified in this study include verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and communication through digital media. Verbal communication emerges as the most dominant form of

interaction, manifested through daily conversations, sharing personal stories, and the use of regional languages from North Sumatra. The use of regional language creates a sense of familiarity and strengthens emotional closeness among first-year students.

In addition, nonverbal communication such as friendly facial expressions, open body posture, and light physical gestures among members contributes to creating a sense of comfort and acceptance. These forms of communication strengthen emotional bonds and help first-year students feel psychologically closer to the organizational environment.

Communication through digital media, particularly instant messaging groups, also plays an important role in maintaining the intensity of interactions. Digital media are used to share information about organizational activities, provide moral support, and sustain a sense of togetherness even when members do not meet face-to-face. For first-year students, the availability of digital communication helps reduce feelings of loneliness, especially when staying in boarding houses or experiencing solitude.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that communication interactions within the IKAMASU regional student organization function as an effective social support system for first-year migrant students at Universitas Trunojoyo Madura. These interactions play a crucial role in helping students manage emotional difficulties that arise from separation from family, cultural differences, and the challenges of adapting to a new academic environment. For many first-year students, the transition to university life away from their hometown becomes a psychologically demanding experience that requires social support.

Based on interview and observational data, homesickness among first-year students is closely associated with feelings of loneliness, emotional instability, and uncertainty during the early stages of migration. Students reported experiencing longing for their families, discomfort in unfamiliar surroundings, and difficulties in adjusting to new social norms. Communication interactions

within IKAMASU provide an important space for students to express these emotions openly and to feel understood by others who share similar experiences.

These findings are consistent with Social Support Theory, which emphasizes that supportive social relationships can significantly reduce emotional pressure and psychological stress (Edward P. Sarafino, 2011). In the context of IKAMASU, social support is not only provided through advice or encouragement but also through continuous interaction that allows students to feel emotionally connected to their peers and seniors. The role of senior members within IKAMASU is particularly significant in creating a supportive communication climate. Senior members actively initiate interactions with first-year students, guide them through organizational activities, and provide informal mentoring related to academic and social life. This proactive communication approach helps reduce social distance and minimizes feelings of isolation among new students.

Communication interactions within IKAMASU take place not only in formal organizational settings but also in informal contexts such as casual gatherings, shared meals, and everyday conversations. These informal interactions are essential in building emotional closeness, as they allow members to communicate more naturally and personally, without hierarchical barriers. Through repeated and consistent communication, first-year students gradually develop a sense of psychological security within the organization. This sense of security encourages students to share personal experiences related to homesickness, adaptation challenges, and emotional struggles. As a result, students no longer perceive their difficulties as individual problems but as shared experiences among fellow migrant students.

Verbal communication is identified as the most dominant form of interaction within IKAMASU. Conversations often revolve around shared regional backgrounds, family stories, and daily experiences as students living in Madura. These conversations create emotional resonance and foster a sense of familiarity that helps reduce feelings of alienation in the new environment. The use of regional language in verbal communication further strengthens emotional bonds among members. Speaking in a familiar dialect allows first-year students to

reconnect with their cultural identity, which provides emotional comfort and reinforces a sense of belonging. This linguistic familiarity plays an important role in alleviating feelings of homesickness.

Open interpersonal communication within IKAMASU enables first-year students to express their emotions without fear of judgment or negative labeling. This condition supports Devito's (2011) assertion that effective interpersonal communication fosters trust, emotional intimacy, and mutual understanding, which are essential for the development of supportive social relationships. In addition to verbal communication, nonverbal communication also plays a crucial role in strengthening emotional support. Friendly facial expressions, open body posture, eye contact, and empathic gestures communicate acceptance and care, reinforcing the supportive atmosphere within the organization.

Observational data indicate that nonverbal cues often accompany verbal interaction, enhancing the emotional quality of communication. These nonverbal signals help first-year students feel acknowledged, valued, and emotionally supported, even in situations where verbal expression may be limited. According to Mulyana (2022), nonverbal communication is particularly effective in conveying emotional meaning in close and personal relationships. Within IKAMASU, nonverbal messages contribute significantly to the creation of a family-like environment that supports students' emotional well-being and social adjustment.

Digital communication also plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of interaction within IKAMASU. Instant messaging groups are actively used to share organizational information, provide emotional encouragement, and maintain social connection beyond face-to-face meetings. For first-year students, digital communication becomes an accessible source of emotional support, especially during moments of solitude in boarding houses. This finding supports Siregar's (2016) argument that mediated communication can strengthen group cohesion and reduce feelings of social isolation.

Overall, the existence of IKAMASU as a community based on shared regional identity fulfills the social needs of first-year students, particularly the

need for belonging and acceptance. In line with Maslow's Social Needs Theory (1943), the fulfillment of these needs contributes significantly to psychological well-being. Therefore, communication interactions within IKAMASU function not only as organizational communication but also as a social adaptation mechanism that helps first-year migrant students alleviate homesickness and successfully adjust to their new academic and social environment.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the communication interactions within the Regional Organization of the Sumatera Utara Student Association (IKAMASU) play a significant role in alleviating the homesickness experienced by new migrant students at Universitas Trunojoyo Madura. Through intense, warm, and family-based communication, IKAMASU serves as a safe space where new students can express feelings of longing, loneliness, and the pressures of adapting to life in a new environment. The communication interactions that occur, whether verbal, non-verbal, or through digital media, provide emotional support, informational assistance, and a sense of togetherness, thereby strengthening social bonds among members.

The research findings show that communication within IKAMASU not only functions as a means of information exchange but also as a mechanism for forming meaning and collective identity, fostering a sense of belonging. Feeling accepted as part of the "family" within IKAMASU helps new students reduce feelings of alienation, enhance emotional comfort, and accelerate their social and cultural adaptation on campus. Thus, communication interactions within IKAMASU become a key factor contributing to the reduction of homesickness among new migrant students.

The implications of this research emphasize that student regional organizations play a strategic role as effective social support systems in maintaining the emotional well-being of migrant students. Conceptually, these findings strengthen the fields of organizational communication and group communication by demonstrating that family-based communication can serve as

an essential tool in managing psychological pressure and supporting the successful adaptation of new students in a new environment.

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