Culture and Communication Styles: Collectivism vs Individualism Cultural Orientations from Malaysian Perspectives

Syasya Firzana Azmi[2], Aini Azeqa Ma'rof[1,2], Haslinda Abdullah[1,2] & Zeinab Zarimohzzabeih[1]

[1]Institute for Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, MALAYSIA, [2]Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, MALAYSIA.
Email**:** azeqa@upm.edu.my

Abstract
The primary objective of this research is to examine the relations between individualism-collectivism and communication styles among students attending public universities in the Klang Valley region of Malaysia. A total of 380 students from three Malaysian public universities were chosen through stratified sampling to participate in this study. The data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents exhibited a moderate level of individualism and high level of communication styles, while nearly all respondents displayed a collectivist orientation. The results also revealed significant correlations between individualism and communication styles such as impression leaving, argumentative, attentive, animated, dramatic, open, and dominant. Meanwhile, collectivism showed correlations with friendly, impression leaving, relaxed, argumentative, attentive, animated, open, and dominant communication styles. From this study, by understanding the principles of individualism and collectivism is vital for effective communication, as these cultural orientations significantly shape individuals' expectations and interpretations of interactions. Recognizing these cultural perspectives can enhance mutual understanding, minimize miscommunication, and improve the overall effectiveness of cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration.
Keywords: Individualism, Collectivism, Communication Styles, University Students

Introduction

A person's communication style is defined by the components of their speech while engaging in communication. Essentially, it signifies how an individual connects with others in social settings. According to Norton (1983), communication style encompasses the verbal and nonverbal behaviors a person utilizes to indicate how their message should be interpreted by others. The communication styles that people adopt during interactions are distinctive to each individual. These styles outline the specific techniques for receiving messages, transmitting them, demonstrating reactions to messages, and transforming information within social interactions.

Kress (1988) elucidates that the combination of styles in certain context and not narrowing to a single style are particularly important in interactions. People possess unique communication styles that are influenced by factors such as culture, experiences, personality, mental conditioning, and thought processes. Each individual's communication style is based on the norms, rules, and values of their specific culture. A culture comprises the shared attributes of a group, including habits, beliefs, and behavioral norms. The role of culture in communication pertains to how cultural aspects of communicators affect the conversational process. In accordance with this, Kim (2017) asserts that culture influences communication and people's understanding of it. In the context of this study, culture has a considerable impact on communication styles, and recognizing this result enhances mutual interactions among people. Identifying individuals' communication styles allows for a deeper understanding of their backgrounds, thought processes, and beliefs about social reality.

Kelly (2021) states that cultural values and conventions dictate the prerequisites for effective communication within a particular culture. Examples of such cultural values in her study include individualism and collectivism. Communication styles are not solely based on individuals; rather, the culture itself influences how people behave, judge others, and perceive social reality. As Norton (1983) described, individuals employ communication styles to connect with others across various settings, groups, and purposes. However, these styles do not explicitly reveal cultural attributes such as behavioral norms and shared beliefs found in different subcultures, including race, age, and gender. Consequently, recognizing diverse communication styles is crucial for enhancing self-awareness and refining soft skills.

Frequently examined dimensions of cultural variability in intercultural communication include individualism-collectivism. These dimensions have been extensively defined in psychological studies (Triandis, 1998) and explored in terms of motivation, self-definition, social behavior, and cognition (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Cultural individualism-collectivism directly affects communication behaviors by shaping the norms and rules that guide actions in both individualistic and collectivistic societies.

As a result of the factors discussed above, communication is a learned behavior influenced by the shared values and norms among diverse individuals. Recent intercultural communication studies have been considering the role of cultural, individualism-collectivism to explain variation in communication behavior. Balakrishnan (2022) clarifies that the communication habits and styles of individuals from different ethnic groups are shaped by culture. However, in Malaysia, previous research has not extensively examined intercultural communication within the university context. Consequently, this research aims to delve into the relationship between individualism-collectivism and self-construal on communication styles among university students at three public universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia: Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). The objective of this study is to identify the communication styles employed by university students

from a multiethnic background. Investigating the communication styles of a group of university students can be associated to understanding the culture of that group, which encompasses the attitudes, values, beliefs, and actions shared by all students at the institution.

Communication Styles Dimensions

Numerous communication style clusters, categories, and classifications have been devised by researchers. To define communication style, scholars often use descriptions and classifications of the relational messages conveyed by individuals during interactions. Norton's foundational work on communicator style is essential for comprehending style in interpersonal communications across diverse situations. Norton (1983) identified nine unique communication styles

Dominant Style

This trait pertains to the tendency to assert oneself in the majority of social settings. A person exhibiting dominance often takes charge in the presence of others and frequently engages in conversation during social encounters. This communication style is commonly linked with individuals who speak at length and often during both one-on-one and group interactions. They communicate with a clear, strong, and steady voice, exuding confidence and a sense of high self-esteem. These individuals are adept at maintaining eye contact and leveraging personal space to reinforce their message.

Dramatic Style

This trait pertains to an individual's capacity for vocal communication. A person with a dramatic communication style often employs vivid, colorful language. They tend to exaggerate consistently to emphasize their point and act out their words verbally. This approach involves the communicator blending their verbal and physical skills to deliver a performative rendition of their message. They may convey their ideas through storytelling, humor, or extreme embellishment. Occasionally, their core message may be challenging to grasp, such as when the communicator struggles to convey unfavorable information or seeks to alleviate tension within the group by downplaying the message.

Argumentative Style

This trait characterizes an individual who consistently engages in debates, readily challenges, and disagrees with others, particularly when defending their own perspective. Their communication style is direct, often causing recipients to become defensive, which in turn hampers effective communication.

Animated Style

This trait characterizes an individual who consistently engages in debates, readily challenges, and disagrees with others, particularly when defending their own perspective. Their communication style is direct, often causing recipients to become defensive, which in turn hampers effective communication.

Animated Style

This trait pertains to an individual's capacity for non-verbal communication. Someone who is animated actively utilizes facial expressions and physical gestures to convey their emotions

and experiences. Such a person relies more on body language than words when interacting with others. They communicate their message through various facial expressions and body movements, including smiling, eye contact, nodding, and the use of hand gestures and posture.

Impression-leaving style

This trait pertains to an individual's capacity for non-verbal communication. Someone who is animated actively utilizes facial expressions and physical gestures to convey their emotions and experiences. Such a person relies more on body language than words when interacting with others. They communicate their message through various facial expressions and body movements, including smiling, eye contact, nodding, and the use of hand gestures and posture.

Relaxed style

This trait is associated with a communicator's attentiveness. An attentive communicator offers support to others and listens intently to their words. This individual intentionally acts in a way that reassures others that their thoughts are being heard. For the attentive communicator, actions hold more weight than words. Exhibiting empathy and exceptional listening skills, they create a comfortable atmosphere for people to engage in conversation.

Attentive Style

This characteristic relates to how vigilant a communicator is. An attentive communicator is encouraging to others and pays close attention to what they have to say. Such a person purposefully behaves in such a manner that people know they are being heard. The attentive communicator's actions speak louder than their words. They are sympathetic and have outstanding listening abilities. Thus, people feel at ease talking to them.

Open Style

This trait pertains to an individual's degree of self-disclosure as a communicator. An open communicator is someone who readily shares personal details and openly expresses feelings and emotions. Others often recognize the person's emotional state even without verbal cues, indicating their openness. Such individuals easily confide in others, revealing their thoughts and emotions without fear. They are unafraid to divulge personal information and tend not to dwell on the consequences of their words. Often talkative and personable, their communication style may be perceived as positive or negative, depending on the receiver's perspective and comfort level.

Friendly Style

This trait characterizes an individual who consistently demonstrates genuine care and kindness towards others. Such a person is seldom confrontational and is often highly regarded by their peers. In this communication style, the individual excels at acknowledging the listener's self-esteem and achievements. People are drawn to engaging with the amiable communicator due to the enjoyable connection they create. Openness, warmth, and the impression that the person is available for others are essential for building trust and persuading others to commit to a cause.

Individualism-collectivism and Communication Styles

Yuan et al (2019) suggest that people with individualistic value orientations tend to focus on results or outcomes in their communication. Hofstede (2011) describes healthy individualists as those who do not rely on a group and view themselves in terms of "I." Cultures with individualist values place importance on voicing personal opinions and expressing oneself truthfully, even if it may cause disagreement. Essentially, individualists prioritize personal rights over duties and emphasize self-care and attention to their immediate family.

In contrast, people in collectivistic cultures tend to behave as though they are connected to their group members. Collectivism often coincides with a high-power distance, characterized by an interdependent sense of self, connected to others, and prioritizing group goals over personal ones. Collectivistic value orientations generally reject communication approaches that intrude upon others, harm their feelings, or reflect negatively on the communicator (Yuan et al., 2019). People in collectivistic cultures trust that strong, unified organizations will support them in their daily lives, placing greater importance on collective objectives rather than individual aspirations (Abdollahi et al., 2017). Collectivism embodies a society where individuals are integrated into tight-knit, cohesive groups that offer protection in return for unwavering loyalty. People in such cultures learn to think of themselves as part of a "we" group, which provides stability and safeguards their identities. Collectivist societies emphasize preserving harmony through social interactions, extending to other aspects of life such as education and work.

Studies have shown that an individual's communication style, belief system, and actions are substantially impacted by their cultural leaning towards individualism or collectivism. This demonstrates that people can prefer either individualism or collectivism but not both simultaneously. Individuals may develop their distinct characteristics and communication styles by drawing from both individualistic and collectivistic cognitive systems in different contexts. Thereby, this study ought to examine the relationship between individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations with the sort of communication styles that the respondents behold.

Method

Population and sample selection

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design, focusing on public university students in the Klang Valley aged between 19 and 27. The choice of this design was due to its efficacy in capturing variables of interest at a specific point in time. The sample for this research comprised undergraduate students from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), and Universiti Malaya (UM), deliberately chosen to encompass diverse ethnic backgrounds, academic years, and programs of study for representative sampling.

The sample size of 380 respondents was arrived at using power analysis calculation, providing a precise estimate of population parameters with a satisfactory level of statistical power. This figure was drawn from a total pool of 44,467 Malaysian undergraduate students in the aforementioned universities. Data collection was performed using a structured questionnaire distributed via an online survey platform, optimizing reach, maintaining participant anonymity, and enabling efficient compilation of responses for subsequent data analysis.

Data Collection
Measures
Individualism-collectivism. The Culture Orientation Scale developed by Triandis and Gelfland (1998) was used to measure individualism-collectivism. The 16-item scale with 9-point scale ranging from definitely no (1) to definitely yes (9) consist of four dimensions; (a) Horizontal Individualism, (b), Vertical Individualism, (c) Horizontal Collectivism, and (d) Vertical Collectivism. Example of items are; "I would rather depend on myself than others", "It is important that I do my job better than others", "It is important to me maintain harmony in my group", "Parents and children must stay together as much as possible". The reliability was $\alpha = .80$.

Communication styles. Communicator Style Measure (CSM) was used to measure 9 communication styles: friendly, attentive, impression leaving, animated, dramatic, argumentative, relaxed, dominant, and open. CSM was developed by Norton (1978) ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Example of items are; "I readily express admiration for others", "What I say usually leaves an impression on people", "I have some nervous mannerisms in my speech". The reliability was $\alpha = 0.86$.

Results and Discussion
Table 1 adeptly presents that the majority of participants, precisely 73.9%, exhibited a moderate alignment with individualistic principles, amassing an average score of 52.63 (6.827). However, only a fraction of the respondents, 99 out of the total 380, or 26.1%, recorded a low affinity towards individualism. Concurrently, a dominant majority of respondents, an impressive 96.6%, demonstrated a moderate commitment to collectivist ideals, with an average score of 59.91 (6.722). In contrast, a scant 13 respondents, approximately 3.4%, indicated a low adherence to collectivism.

These findings clearly suggest that students are more likely to lean towards collectivism than individualism, as evidenced by the higher number of respondents with a predilection for collectivist tendencies. It's noteworthy that both individualistic and collectivist proclivities have been observed across myriad cultural contexts. Moreover, within these tendencies, it's intriguing that individuals from one culture may prioritize a certain attribute or concept differently from another group, even if both groups are classified under the same category of being either collectivist or individualist. Positioned at the nexus of the individualist-collectivist continuum, Malaysian culture presents a unique blend of these dichotomous tendencies. Based on previous research, it's postulated that the Malaysian ethos more closely aligns with the collectivist cultures of China and Japan than with the individualistic cultures of the UK and the US (Noraini et al., 2018).

Table 1
Level of individualism and collectivism

Level	n	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Individualism-collectivism						
Individualism			52.63	6.827	36	67
Low (0 - 48)	99	26.1%				
Moderate (49 - 96)	281	73.9%				
Collectivism			59.91	6.722	43	72
Low (0 - 48)	13	3.4%				
Moderate (49 - 96)	367	96.6%				

Meanwhile, Table 2 shows that all respondents reported high levels for each communication styles. The high occurrence of all nine communication styles, as outlined by Norton (1983), among Malaysian public university students can be attributed to a multitude of factors, both cultural and educational. Firstly, the Malaysian culture, which balances both collectivist and individualist values, nurtures a unique environment conducive to a range of communication styles. The societal emphasis on harmony, respect, and consensus, typical of collectivist cultures, may promote styles such as attentive and relaxed communication. On the other hand, the growing focus on self-expression and autonomy, associated with individualist cultures, might encourage styles like argumentative and open communication.

Secondly, the university setting itself is a fertile ground for diverse communication styles. Academic environments typically stimulate intellectual exchange, encouraging students to defend their viewpoints (argumentative), show enthusiasm (animated), adapt to different social situations (impression-leaving), and express their thoughts openly (open). Moreover, the necessity of group work in many academic fields fosters cooperation and consensus-building, promoting attentive, relaxed, and friendly communication.

Lastly, the multicultural composition of Malaysian universities, where students from different ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds interact, necessitates a versatile repertoire of communication styles. In such diverse environments, students learn to be more open, dramatic, friendly, and dominant, depending on the social context. Thus, the high manifestation of all nine communication styles among Malaysian public university students can be seen as a testament to the dynamic interplay between their cultural context and educational setting, shaping their communication skills in a uniquely versatile way.

Table 2
Level of communication styles

Variable	N	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<u>Friendly</u>						
Low (1.00 – 2.33)	71	19.0				
Moderate (2.34 – 3.67)	189	50.0	2.6691	0.84357	1	5
High (3.68 – 5.00)	120	31.0				
<u>Impression Leaving</u>						
Low (1.00 – 2.33)	95	25.0				
Moderate (2.34 – 3.67)	185	49.0	2.9954	0.77230	1	5
High (3.68 – 5.00)	100	26.0				
<u>Relaxed</u>						
Low (1.00 – 2.33)	81	21.0				
Moderate (2.34 – 3.67)	199	52.0	2.9980	0.72518	1	5
High (3.68 – 5.00)	100	26.0				
<u>Argumentative</u>						
Low (1.00 – 2.33)	61	16				
Moderate (2.34 – 3.67)	218	57	3.0711	0.78778	1	5
High (3.68 – 5.00)	99	27				
<u>Attentive</u>						
Low (1.00 – 2.33)						5
Moderate (2.34 – 3.67)	102	28				
High (3.68 – 5.00)	179	47	2.6743	0.79558	1	
	99	25				
<u>Animated</u>						
Low (1.00 – 2.33)	91	24				
Moderate (2.34 – 3.67)	199	52	2.5112	0.74307	1	5
High (3.68 – 5.00)	90	24				
<u>Dramatic</u>						
Low (1.00 – 2.33)	87	23				
Moderate (2.34 – 3.67)	219	58	3.0151	0.55763	1	5
High (3.68 – 5.00)	74	19				
<u>Open</u>	85	22				
Low (1.00 – 2.33)	216	57	3.0263	0.50456	1	

Moderate (2.34 – 3.67) High (3.68 – 5.00)	79	21				5
Dominant						
Low (1.00 – 2.33) Moderate (2.34 – 3.67) High (3.68 – 5.00)	42 245 93	11 65 24	3.1737	0.82413	1	5

As portrayed in Table 3, a discernible negative correlation emerged between individualism and various communication styles: impression leaving (r = -.144, p<.05), argumentative (r = -.117, p<.05), animated (r = -.257, p<.05), dramatic (r = -.223, p<.05), open (r = -.243, p<.05), and dominant (r = -.097, p<.05). This relationship reveals a nuanced dynamic wherein students with pronounced individualistic tendencies exhibited reduced propensity towards these communication styles. Although these correlations might be deemed weak, they are statistically significant, indicating a credible interplay. Simultaneously, a mild positive correlation surfaced between individualism and an attentive communication style (r = .164, p<.05), shedding light on a unique pattern where lower individualism corresponded to diminished attentiveness among students.

Additionally, the analysis found no significant correlations between individualism and two communication styles: friendly (r = -.54, p>.05) and relaxed (r = .26, p>.05). This observation suggests an absence of a notable link between these specific communication styles and individualism. In cultures that lean towards individualism, personal power often drives a self-focused perspective and induces a sense of happiness. Despite the weak correlation, we must note that Asian societies typically favor socialized power, encouraging altruistic behaviors (Xiao et al., 2022), and preferring indirect communication while avoiding confrontations, and understanding nonverbal cues (Balakrishnan, 2022). This might contribute to the relatively low correlations as compared to Western societies, where talkativeness and dominance are more common (Yuan et al., 2019).

Specifically, impression leaving communication style involves tailoring one's communication to leave a positive or desired impression on others. An individualistic person may be less concerned about managing others' impressions of them because of their self-focused perspective, which values self-expression and personal goals over group perception (Triandis, 1995). Thus, as individualistic tendencies increase, the tendency to communicate in an impression-leaving style decrease.

The argumentative communication style is characterized by presenting and defending positions on controversial issues (Infante & Rancer, 1982). While it might seem that individualism promotes argumentative styles due to its emphasis on personal opinions and autonomy, a negative correlation suggests that, in the studied context, individualistic tendencies were associated with a decrease in argumentative communication. This might be explained by different cultural interpretations of argumentativeness; in some cultures, open disagreement might be seen as disrespectful or disruptive to group harmony, affecting the relationship between individualism and argumentativeness (Kim et al., 2015).

An argumentative style is one where individuals openly state their opinions and are not afraid to engage in disputes (Infante & Rancer, 1982). Although individualistic cultures generally value self-expression, the negative correlation suggests that an increase in individualism

corresponds with a decrease in argumentativeness. This might be because, despite valuing personal opinions, individuals from these cultures may not necessarily engage in argumentative behaviors that could potentially disrupt social harmony or personal relationships. Animated and dramatic styles, which involve expressing emotions vividly or exaggerating to make a point, may also decrease with increasing individualism, possibly due to a cultural preference for more straightforward, less emotionally charged communication (Gudykunst, 2003).

An open communication style is characterized by transparency, directness, and willingness to share information freely. The negative correlation with individualism may seem counterintuitive since individualistic cultures often encourage freedom of expression and opinion. However, it could be that the studied sample associates open communication with vulnerability or risk, which may conflict with the individualistic values of autonomy and self-reliance. Alternatively, it could reflect cultural differences in the interpretation of what constitutes 'open' communication, where individualistic cultures might favour directness over complete openness. Meanwhile, from this study, an individual who values individualism and is also attentive in their communication is likely to listen carefully and respond directly to others, while maintaining their independence and personal autonomy. This can result in the beneficial combination of open self-expression with a deep understanding of others' perspectives, fostering effective communication while respecting individuality.

It can be concluded that, the negative correlation between individualism and these communication styles suggests that an increase in individualistic tendencies is associated with a decrease in the use of impression leaving, argumentative, animated, dramatic, and open communication styles. However, these correlations are not universally applicable and can vary depending on cultural context and individual factors. Further research would be required to understand the specific reasons for these relationships.

Table 3
The relationship between individualism-collectivism with communication styles.

Variables	Cultural factors			
	Individualism		Collectivism	
	r	*p*	*r*	*p*
Communication Styles				
Friendly	-.54	.294	-.182**	.000
Impression Leaving	-.144**	.005	-.414**	.000
Relaxed	.26	.614	-.118**	.021
Argumentative	-.117*	.023	-.273**	.000
Attentive	.164**	.001	-.301**	.000
Animated	-.257**	.000	-.289**	.000
Dramatic	-.223**	.000	-.077	.136
Open	-.243**	.000	-.202**	.000
Dominant	-.097	.059	-.272**	.000

Note: *** Level of significant is at p < 0.001

In relation to collectivism and communication styles, the data presented in Table 3 reveal discernible negative correlations between collectivism and the following communication styles: friendly (r = -.182, p<.05), relaxed (r = -.118, p<.05), argumentative (r = -.273, p<.05), attentive (r = -.301, p<.05), animated (r = -.289, p<.05), open (r = -.202, p<.05), and dominant

(r = -.272, p<.05). This suggests a nuanced relationship wherein a decrease in collectivist tendencies corresponds to an increase in these particular communication styles. Despite being categorically classified as a high context culture - synonymous with collectivism - Asian societies, including university students, display this intriguing dynamic. University students, for instance, often prioritize friendships and interpersonal relationships (Chiou, 2014), which may influence these correlations. Although these correlations might appear weak, they hold statistical significance, underlining their relevance.

Interestingly, a negative correlation also emerges between collectivism and the impression leaving communication style (r = -.414, p<.05). This relationship elucidates that as students lean more towards collectivism, their inclination to leave an impression decrease. The data suggests that students who identify strongly with a collective ethos do not perceive themselves as being overly dramatic in their communication styles. On a broader scale, these findings illuminate the unique communication patterns that resonate within societies deeply rooted in collectivism, like Malaysia.

Specifically, a significant negative correlation between collectivism and the friendly, impression leaving, relaxed, argumentative, attentive, animated, and open communication styles means that as collectivist tendencies increase, the prevalence of these communication styles tends to decrease, and vice versa. Starting with friendly and relaxed styles, these involve amicable, easy-going interactions and the tendency to avoid conflict. In the context of a collectivist culture, the negative correlation might seem counter-intuitive, as these cultures are often characterized by strong interpersonal relationships and harmony (Hofstede, 1980). However, it's possible that these communication styles are interpreted differently across cultural contexts. For instance, a friendly communication style might be associated with individualistic cultures that emphasize openness and self-expression (Triandis, 1995), while a relaxed style might be linked with individual freedom and flexibility, which are less emphasized in collectivist cultures. Similarly, the impression leaving style, which involves adapting one's communication to influence others' perceptions, might be less common in collectivist cultures that prioritize group consensus over individual perception management (Kim & Yuan, 2015).

As for argumentative, attentive, animated, and open styles, these involve defending one's positions, actively listening to others, expressing emotions vividly, and sharing information freely, respectively. The negative correlation with collectivism suggests that these styles become less common as collectivist tendencies increase. This could be due to cultural norms that discourage open disagreement (argumentative style), prioritize group focus over individual attention (attentive style), suppress overt emotional expression for the sake of group harmony (animated style), and limit information sharing to maintain group boundaries (open style) (Hall & Hall, 2001; Gudykunst, 2003).

In conclusion, the negative correlation between collectivism and these communication styles suggests a complex interplay between cultural values and communication patterns. As people in collectivist cultures prioritize group goals and harmony, they may adopt different communication styles that align with these priorities, resulting in lower tendencies for friendly, impression leaving, relaxed, argumentative, attentive, animated, and open communication. However, these correlations can vary depending on the specific cultural and individual contexts, and further research would be required to fully understand these relationships.

The Significance of Collectivist Cultural Orientations among Malaysian Public University Students

The collectivist nature of Malaysian public university students is primarily shaped by their socio-cultural background. Rooted in Confucian principles, Malaysian society values group harmony, respect for authority, and family ties, all of which are essential features of collectivist societies (Hofstede, 1980). Education in Malaysia is also influenced by this collectivist approach, emphasizing mutual respect, cooperation, and communal learning, and discouraging overt displays of individual achievement (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Furthermore, study by Lee and Mustafa (2022) showed that communal values and cooperative behavior were frequently encouraged in Malaysian higher education institutions, leading to a more collectivist mindset among students. As a result, Malaysian public university students tend to prioritize group success over individual achievement, reflecting the broader cultural context in which they live and learn.

The collectivist culture among Malaysian public university students offers numerous benefits. Firstly, a focus on collective harmony and mutual respect fosters a supportive and collaborative learning environment (Ibrahim et al., 2017). In such environments, students are more likely to help each other and share knowledge, which can enhance the overall academic performance of the group. Additionally, the collectivist emphasis on teamwork and cooperation equips students with essential interpersonal skills necessary for future employment. According to a study by Siti Hajar and Manan (2022), these collaborative skills are highly valued in today's increasingly interconnected and globalized workplace.

Moreover, a collectivist culture contributes to the students' socio-emotional well-being. The strong sense of belonging and unity derived from this culture provides a solid social support network, which can be crucial in mitigating stress and promoting mental health among university students (Lai et al., 2022). Furthermore, the respect for authority intrinsic to collectivist societies may encourage students to seek guidance from their professors and seniors more readily, facilitating their academic and personal growth. Collectivism in Malaysian universities thus helps prepare students not only for academic success but also for holistic personal development and well-being.

The impact and implications of the communication styles on a collectivist culture

The communication styles that negatively correlate with collectivism could have significant impacts on the interpersonal and group dynamics within a collectivist culture such as Malaysia, especially among university students. A decreased prevalence of friendly, relaxed, argumentative, attentive, animated, and open communication styles may result in a certain type of group harmony, but it could also limit open dialogue and individual expression. For instance, the suppressed argumentative style might discourage students from openly sharing their perspectives or challenging existing ideas, which could limit intellectual diversity and hinder the growth of critical thinking skills, often crucial in a university setting (Ma & Zhou, 2018). Similarly, a decreased prevalence of open communication might restrict information sharing, which could inhibit collaborative learning and innovation (Yuan et al., 2019).

Moreover, a less animated communication style might reduce the outward expression of emotions, which could affect emotional literacy – the ability to recognize, understand, and manage our own and others' emotions (Saarni, 1999). Emotional literacy is associated with a range of positive outcomes, including better interpersonal relationships, improved academic

performance, and increased well-being (Seppälä, 2020). Thus, a cultural preference for less animated communication might limit the development and expression of emotional literacy. However, it's important to note that these potential impacts are context-specific and can be mediated by other cultural and individual factors. Furthermore, these patterns also reflect the cultural values of group harmony and consensus that are deeply rooted in Malaysian society (Noraini et al., 2018). These values contribute to a cooperative and communal university environment that can facilitate mutual support and collective success. Therefore, understanding the interplay between communication styles and cultural values can help educators and students navigate the complexities of interpersonal communication in a multicultural university setting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, results from this study highlights the distinct communication patterns prevalent in a collectivist culture, such as that of Malaysian university students. While these patterns can promote group harmony and consensus, they might also pose certain challenges, potentially limiting open dialogue, individual expression, intellectual diversity, and emotional literacy. Yet, these are inherently tied to the deeply held cultural values in these societies, fostering a cooperative and communal environment that encourages mutual support and collective success. The understanding of this complex interplay between communication styles and cultural values offers valuable insights for educators and students in navigating the rich tapestry of interpersonal communication within a multicultural university setting.

References

Balakrishnan, K. (2022). Influence of Cultural Dimensions on Intercultural Communication Styles: Ethnicity in a Moderating Role. *Journal of Communication, Language and Culture*, *2*(1), 46–62.

Gudykunst, W. B. (2003). Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Communication. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Hajar, A., & Manan, S. A. (2022). Emergency remote English language teaching and learning: Voices of primary school students and teachers in Kazakhstan. *Review of Education*, *10*(2), e3358.

Hall, E. T., & Hall, M. R. (2001). Key concepts: Underlying structures of culture. *International HRM: Managing diversity in the workplace*, *24*.

Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture and organizations. *International studies of management & organization*, *10*(4), 15-41.

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. *Online readings in psychology and culture*, *2*(1), 2307-0919.

Ibrahim, M., Baharun, H., Harun, H., & Othman, N. (2017). Antecedents of Intrinsic Motivation, Metacognition and Their Effects on Students' Academic Performance in Fundamental Knowledge for Matriculation Courses. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, *14*(2), 211-246.

Infante, D. A., and Rancer, A. S. (1982) A Conceptualization and Measure of Argumentativeness. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 46, 72-80.

Kelly, B. (2021). How Culture Affects Communication: A Quick Guide. Communication Styles.

Kim, M., & Yuan, Y. (2015). No cross-cultural differences in the Gettier car case intuition: A replication study of Weinberg et al. 2001. *Episteme*, *12*(3), 355-361.

Kim, Y. Y. (2017). *Oxford Research Encyclopedias of Communication* (Ed.), Cross-cultural adaptation.

Kress, G. R. (Ed.). (1988). *Communication and culture: An introduction*. UNSW Press.

Lai, S. A., Pang, K. Y., Siau, C. S., Chan, C. M. H., Tan, Y. K., Ooi, P. B., ... & Ho, M. C. (2022). Social support as a mediator in the relationship between perceived stress and nomophobia: An Investigation among Malaysian university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Current Psychology*, 1-8.

Ma, C., & Zhou, W. (2022). Effects of unfolding case-based learning on academic achievement, critical thinking, and self-confidence in undergraduate nursing students learning health assessment skills. *Nurse Education in Practice*, *60*, 103321.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224–253

Noraini, M. N., Nur Diana, A. R, & Afiq, M. I. M. Z. (2018). Gratitude, Gratitude Intervention and Well-being in Malaysia. *The Journal of Behavioural Science*, 13(2), 1-18.

Norton, R. W. (1978). Foundation of a communicator style construct. *Human Communication Research*, *4*(2), 99-112.

Norton, R. W. (1983). Communicator Style: Theory, Applications, and Measures. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA, USA.

Saarni, C. (1999). A Skill-Based Model of Emotional Competence: A Developmental Perspective.

Seppala, E. M., Bradley, C., Moeller, J., Harouni, L., Nandamudi, D., & Brackett, M. A. (2020). Promoting mental health and psychological thriving in university students: a randomized controlled trial of three well-being interventions. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 590.

Triandis, H. C. (1995). Individualism & collectivism. Westview Press.

Triandis, H. C., & Gelfand, M. J. (1998). Converging measurement of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(1), 118.

Xiao, S. X., Spinrad, T. L., Xu, J., Eisenberg, N., Laible, D. J., Carlo, G., ... & Xu, X. (2022). Parents' valuing diversity and White children's prosociality toward White and Black peers. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *83*, 101459.

Yuan, C. Y., Liao, W., & Bazarova, N. N. (2019). Judging Expertise Through Communication Styles in Intercultural Collaboration.