

Self-Concept in the Effectiveness of Gender Communication among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Gender communication effectiveness is a critical aspect of academic interaction in higher education, yet it is frequently influenced by internal psychological dynamics. This study aims to examine the influence of self-concept on the effectiveness of gender communication among university students. Utilizing a quantitative approach with a simple linear regression method, data were collected from 340 respondents selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. The research instruments included the Self-Concept Scale (Calhoun & Acocella) and the Gender Communication Scale (Michael Neer). The results of the analysis indicate that self-concept has a positive and significant effect on gender communication effectiveness ($t = 11.620$; $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.285 indicates that self-concept contributes 28.5% to the variance in gender communication. Descriptively, the majority of students fall into the moderate self-concept category (83.24%) and the sufficient gender communication category (89.71%). These findings confirm that psychological stability, in the form of positive self-assessment, serves as an essential foundation for the creation of adaptive and assertive cross-gender communication patterns.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary social reality reveals an imbalance in the relationship between men and women, rooted in the differentiation of roles within society. Cultural views, values, and norms often position both genders differently, which are subsequently internalized into daily interaction patterns. Traditionally, men are socialized to dominate public spaces through communication styles that are assertive, direct, and independent. Conversely, women are often channeled toward private spheres with nurturing, polite, and indirect communication styles (Hanif, 2025; Yusup & Hanif, 2025). This differentiation not only results in gender inequity but also creates a gap in communication competence, where men are perceived as more capable in public settings while women are seen as excelling in personal domains (Maela & Hanif, 2025).

However, this phenomenon is dynamic and situational. Despite the persistence of traditional stereotypes, Wheelan & Verdi (1992) found that gender-based

communication differences often only emerge during the first 30 to 60 minutes of group interaction and tend to dissipate as the interaction progresses. This is supported by Tannen (1990), who argues that differences in speech styles do not necessarily represent differences in ability, but rather differences in social objectives. In academic settings, preliminary data from interviews with Subject A (personal communication, September 3, 2022) indicated significant behavioral adaptation. Subject A revealed a conscious shift in communication patterns from 'unfiltered' to 'cautious' when moving from same-sex to opposite-sex groups to align with social constructions. This suggests that students engage in intense identity negotiation during cross-gender interactions.

While students are required to be assertive for academic efficacy—as demonstrated by Qibtiyah (2017), communication competence in university environments is no longer viewed merely as a biological byproduct. Recent research emphasizes that cross-gender communication effectiveness is heavily influenced by an individual's internal perceptions. Neer and Hudson (1983) and Juliano (2015) stress that while gender contributes through the socialization of behavioral roles, it is not the sole determinant of communication style differences. A critical factor mediating this performance is the individual's psychological state, encapsulated in the self-concept.

Self-concept is the mental image, knowledge, and evaluation an individual holds regarding themselves, formed through experience and environmental interaction. It acts as a psychological "filter" determining how one perceives, treats, and socializes their identity. Individuals with a positive self-concept tend to possess objective self-assessments and realistic expectations, providing the confidence necessary to communicate effectively without feeling threatened by the gender of their interlocutor.

Despite the theoretical recognition of self-concept, much of the gender communication literature remains focused on sociolinguistic aspects, such as linguistic styles or topic selection based on sex. There is a lack of quantitative evidence specifically linking "internal self" (self-concept) with "external performance" (gender communication effectiveness) in competitive higher education ecosystems. Modern campus dynamics demand intense cross-gender collaboration, yet internal psychological barriers often hinder equitable and effective communication. Therefore, this study aims to address this literature gap by testing the influence of self-concept on gender communication effectiveness among students. The novelty of this research lies in examining self-concept as a psychological determinant that enables individuals to transcend gender-based communication barriers in academic environments.

2. Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The population consists of 11,352 active undergraduate students at Antasari State Islamic University (UIN) Banjarmasin. Using the Isaac and Michael (1995) table with a 5% error margin, a sample of 340 students was determined. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to ensure representativeness across faculties and cohorts.

Data were collected using two Likert-type scales. The self-concept variable was measured using a scale based on Calhoun and Acocella (1990), comprising 19 items with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.811. Gender communication effectiveness was measured through an adaptation of Neer and Hudson's (1983) GCS, involving 22 valid items ($r > 0.355$) and a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.908. Analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25, involving descriptive categorization and inferential simple linear regression. Classical assumption tests (normality and linearity) were performed prior to hypothesis testing.

3. Literature Review

Self-concept is defined as a set of hypothetical concepts referring to the complex characteristics of a person's physical, behavioral, and psychological processes (Calhoun & Acocella, 1990). Structurally, this construct consists of three primary dimensions: (1) self-knowledge, involving factual identity information; (2) self-expectation, referring to ideal standards or the "future self"; and (3) self-assessment, the evaluation of how well one meets those standards. Recent research by Harris and Orth (2020) suggests that self-esteem remains stable across the lifespan and serves as a foundation for mental health and interpersonal quality. Furthermore, Mercer (2020) argues that contemporary self-concept is significantly influenced by digital social interactions and online social comparisons.

Gender communication is understood as the manifestation of role behaviors resulting in recurring communication patterns (Neer & Hudson, 1983). Neer and Hudson (1983) developed the Gender Communication Scale (GCS), measuring four dimensions: (1) role dominance, (2) role sensitivity, (3) role adaptability, and (4) role flexibility. This construct posits that effectiveness depends on the ability to adjust communication styles situationally (adaptability) rather than adhering to biological stereotypes. Modern perspectives, such as Wood and Fixmer-Oraiz (2019), note that gender communication is increasingly influenced by fluid cultural norms. Merchant (2022) found that individuals with high role flexibility (androgyny) are more successful in navigating conflicts by integrating assertive and supportive styles as needed.

The theoretical link between self-concept and gender communication is based on the assumption that internal evaluations dictate external behaviors. Calhoun and Acocella (1990) state that individuals with positive, realistic self-concepts experience lower social anxiety, facilitating openness. Empirically, this psychological state is a prerequisite for role adaptability and flexibility (Neer & Hudson, 1983). Research by Gefen and Ridings (2022) supports this, finding that positive self-perception correlates with communication effectiveness in diverse environments. Individuals with strong self-assessment can adjust their styles without feeling threatened by gender differences. Thus, the hypothesis is proposed as: H1: Self-concept has a positive and significant effect on gender communication ability.

4. Results and Discussion

a. Results

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Descriptive analysis was conducted to provide a statistical overview of the research data distribution obtained from the 340 respondents. A comprehensive summary of the descriptive statistics for the Self-Concept and Gender Communication variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Standar Deviasi
Self-Concept	340	19	76	20.229	59,50	6,45
Gender Communication	340	22	88	21.599	63,53	6,36
Valid N (<i>listwise</i>)	340					

Based on the results of the data analysis, a categorization of scores was conducted to examine the distributional tendencies of the respondents across each variable. The frequency distribution of these findings is delineated in Table 2.

Table 2. Categorization of Self-Concept Levels and Gender Communication Effectiveness

Variabel	Category	Score Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Self-Concept	High	$X \geq 66,5$	47	13,82%
	Moderate	$47,5 < X < 66,5$	283	83,24%
	Low	$X \leq 47,5$	10	2,94%
Gender Communication	Good	$X \geq 77$	4	1,17%
	Sufficient	$55 < X < 77$	305	89,71%
	Poor	$X \leq 55$	31	9,12%

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that a significant majority of students possess a self-concept within the moderate category (83.24%) and exhibit gender communication effectiveness at a sufficient level (89.71%). Notably, only a negligible proportion of students (1.17%) reached the 'Good' category in gender communication, which underscores the imperative for optimizing cross-gender interaction competencies within the academic environment

Hypothesis Testing: Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Upon fulfilling the classical assumption tests, specifically normality and linearity, a simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the influence of self-concept on gender communication effectiveness. The results of this statistical analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	32,197	2,712		11,873	.000

Self-Concept	0,527	0,045	0,534	11,62	.000
Statistical Model					
R	0,534				
R Square	0,285				
F	135,028				
Sig.	0				

Results of Regression Analysis As presented in Table 3, the regression model yielded an F-statistic of 135.028 ($p < .001$), indicating that the model is statistically significant in predicting gender communication effectiveness. The self-concept variable exerts a positive and significant partial influence ($t = 11.620$; $p < .001$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.285 suggests that self-concept accounts for 28.5% of the variance in gender communication effectiveness, while the remaining 71.5% is attributable to other factors beyond the scope of this model. The resulting regression equation is $Y = 32.197 + 0.527X$, indicating that for every one-unit increase in the self-concept score, the gender communication score is predicted to increase by 0.527 points. Collectively, these findings provide robust empirical evidence that self-concept serves as a crucial and significant predictor of gender communication effectiveness. A more positive internal perception—encompassing self-assessment, self-knowledge, and self-expectation—is significantly associated with more adaptive and flexible communication competence in cross-gender interactions.

b. Discussion

The primary finding of this study confirms that self-concept exerts a positive and significant influence on the effectiveness of gender communication among university students ($t = 11.620$; $p < 0.001$). Theoretically, this result reinforces the proposition by Calhoun and Acocella (1990) that an individual's internal evaluation serves as a primary determinant of their external behavior. In this context, a healthy self-concept—encompassing objective self-assessment and realistic expectations—becomes a prerequisite for the emergence of openness in social interactions. Students who perceive and accept themselves positively are less likely to feel threatened during cross-gender interactions. This aligns with the findings of Harris and Orth (2020), which suggest that stable self-esteem functions as a foundation for the quality of interpersonal relationships. Consequently, such individuals are able to demonstrate higher role flexibility and sensitivity, as self-concept functions as a stable psychological filter. A more granular analysis of self-concept dimensions provides specific insights. Self-knowledge, which includes factual information regarding identity, enables students to recognize their communicative strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to adjust their speaking styles without compromising their personal identity. Meanwhile, positive self-assessment provides a foundation of self-confidence that empowers students to be assertive without resorting to aggressive dominance. This finding intersects closely with the dimensions of role adaptability and sensitivity within the Gender Communication Scale (GCS) formulated by Neer and Hudson (1983). Empirically, this study demonstrates that gender communication effectiveness is not merely determined by technical speaking

skills but is rooted in how individuals perceive their "future self" or self-expectation within social spaces. Despite the statistically significant influence, descriptive data indicate that the majority of students still fall into the "moderate" self-concept category (83.24%) and the "sufficient" gender communication category (89.71%). This phenomenon opens an intriguing discussion regarding local cultural perspectives in Banjarmasin and the academic environment at UIN Antasari. The deep-seated norms of politeness in Banjar culture, combined with religious values, likely foster guarded communication patterns characterized by self-censorship. While this may maintain social harmony, rigid adherence to traditional gender norms can limit the role flexibility that Merchant (2022) identifies as a key success factor in navigating interactional conflicts. The low proportion of students in the "good" category (1.17%) suggests a "comfort zone" wherein students prefer normative safe patterns over exploring more fluid and dynamic communication styles necessitated by contemporary demands (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz, 2019). Furthermore, the R^2 value of 0.285 indicates that 28.5% of the variance in gender communication is influenced by factors outside the current model. These factors are suspected to include digital social interactions, which, according to Mercer (2020), have become significant socialization agents alongside parents and peers. Social comparisons in cyberspace and social media algorithms often reinforce gender polarization, potentially hindering students' ability to balance assertive and supportive communication styles. Within the landscape of existing research, these findings support the study by Gefen and Ridings (2022), which posits that positive self-perception correlates with communication effectiveness in diverse environments. However, a significant discrepancy arises when comparing these results with the study by Qibtiyah (2017), which found that gender sensitivity does not always relate significantly to communication patterns. In the case of UIN Antasari students, internal psychological attributes (self-concept) proved to be a stronger predictor than normative understanding of gender sensitivity. This provides a novel perspective: strengthening internal character and fostering self-awareness is far more effective than merely providing cognitive training on gender issues. In conclusion, the originality of this research lies in its integration of psychological self-concept attributes with gender communication scales within an Islamic higher education ecosystem. While previous studies often depicted linguistic style differences as products of static culture, this research provides quantitative evidence that such barriers are dynamic and can be bridged through the development of self-concept. The practical implication underscores the need for student counseling services to prioritize programs focused on self-esteem and self-efficacy as strategic solutions for fostering a more adaptive, inclusive, and assertive academic environment.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and the subsequent discussion, it can be concluded that self-concept exerts a positive and significant influence on the effectiveness of gender communication among university students. These findings demonstrate that a more positive self-concept—characterized by healthy self-knowledge, objective self-assessment, and realistic self-expectations—leads to more effective cross-gender communication abilities. Statistically, self-concept accounts for 28.5% of the variance

in gender communication effectiveness. Descriptively, the majority of students are situated at a moderate level, suggesting that while interpersonal interactions are generally functional, there remains significant potential for optimization through the reinforcement of internal psychological factors. The implications of this study underscore that to foster inclusive and assertive academic communication, educational institutions must prioritize character development and psychological stability as the fundamental pillars of social interaction.

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