

***Systems of Intercultural Communication among University
Students in Southern Ethiopia: The Case of Dilla and Hawassa
Universities***

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the system of intercultural communication among university students. Specifically, it examined the extent of cultural differences that determine the students' intercultural communication, explored factors (internal and external) affecting effective intercultural communication, and evaluated intercultural communication sensitivity level of university students and the contribution of education and intercultural experience to create conducive campus environment. The Federal Government of Ethiopia has been investing large sum of money for the expansion and establishment of public universities. In the last five years, the number of higher public institutions has increased by twelve, which enables the country to have a total of twenty-three public universities and this, in turn, increased the capacity of students' enrolment in universities as well. This effort shows that the Ethiopian Government gives much attention to the higher education centers. This mere expansion of education doesn't guarantee its contribution to national scenario unless we educate students to manage conflicting situations among themselves. Universities are ideal centers that mirror the existence of diversified people from different ethno-linguistics, socio-economic and religious backgrounds. Nonetheless, nowadays, it is common to see university-based conflicts among students of different ethnic, religious, and socio-political backgrounds. The research tried to answer the following questions: Do students recognize cultural differences during their interaction with students from different cultural backgrounds? If so, how do they act? What are the roles of in-campus and out-campus experiences influencing the students' intercultural communication? How do university leadership and staff manage cultural diversity? In the study, research methods and/or techniques such as observation, structured and unstructured interviews as well as FGDs were used to collect relevant data using checklist, structured questionnaire, and interview guide were employed as research instruments to collect primary data from different sources.

Background of the Study

*“If a man is gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world.”*¹⁶⁸ Francis Bacon

Ethiopia is home for a cultural multitude of people, which is a unique feature, many nations are lacking. Because of this, the saying “Our diversity is our beauty, our beauty is our strength”¹⁶⁹ makes perfect sense. But this does not mean there is no challenge for a nation with diverse culture to let them co-exist, and if the cultural differences are not respected and well treated it might lead to a devastating conflict.

University students are the nation’s future political leaders, policy makers and professionals and they can effectively execute their responsibility when they develop a personality that entertains national identity. A person better develops such identity feeling when he/she is exposed to all kinds of principles/philosophies found in the country. People who are good in intercultural communication can easily understand others, bound the multitude towards a communication goal, design policies and programs that satisfy all. Therefore, the researchers believe that concerned bodies should put critical attention on how to develop effective intercultural communication among university students.

It is common to see conflicts in the Ethiopian universities. Even though most of the conflicts are managed at the university level, some of them have caused national crisis (Abera, 2010, p.2) and many of the university conflicts are occurred because of simple misunderstanding between different cultures

¹⁶⁸ Typhon International Corp, 2004, *The New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of English Language: Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition*. Naples Florida: Trident Press International.

¹⁶⁹ House of Federation’s quote.

(individual and/or group members). Such kinds of conflicts and violence will be prevented mainly through effective intercultural communication. Effective intercultural communication enables individuals and the public to reach on common understanding and build mutual interest.

Our government allocated millions of Eth. Birr to expand higher education. In the past five years alone, the number of higher institutions increased by twelve. The increase in number of universities also helps the nation to increase its enrollment (2010, p.4). All of these efforts show how government gives high value to education. In fact, education, especially higher education, has immense contribution to fasten the ongoing development activities. Ethiopia's Five Years Growth and Transformation Plan stipulates that simple expansion of education, however, would not grant its priceless contribution to the nation unless we prepare the students to the coming challenges. One of the challenges is a variety of cultures the nation holds. Students need to entertain all cultures equally and to maintain effective intercultural communication. This could not happen unless the students are aware of the various cultures and identify the barriers that cause obstacles for intercultural communication. Students need support to develop the knowledge of systems of intercultural communication as well as the barriers.

Rationale of the Problem

*What nobler employment, or more valuable to the state, than that of the man who instructs the rising generation?*¹⁷⁰ Cicero

Higher institutions are the places where the youngsters experience new level of personal growth, and are starting to build their mind for their next higher personality and responsibility. The knowledge and experiences that university students obtain in the campus have become the base for their future life's decision and philosophy. They meet with others who have different life outlook and measurements of individuals' identity. Their few experiences crystallize their previous life principles but most of them differ to some extent or completely. Most of these divergent truths are the results of their communication from other cultures. This communication brings different beliefs and attitudes to the students and when they are not ready to accept or reconcile the differences, it could create a devastating problem on their personality as well as social life. Therefore, the responsible parties have to give their interest to smoothen the promotion stage of the university students inside and outside of the campus.

Some university students join the campus expecting different social life, while most of them simply join it without anticipating the reality. As the students come from various places with various social life style, the communication in-campus become more or less different to the students. When they were in their birth places, communication was easy to lead their life but in the campus the communication mainly becomes with different

¹⁷⁰ Typhon International Corp, 2004, *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of English Language: Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition*. Naples Florida: Trident Press International.

cultures and demands knowledge of intercultural communication. Exposure to ‘strange’ cultures with its features, social expectations and language-requirements is considered a unique multilevel learning experience where intercultural competence, knowledge of and respect for other cultures may be developed¹⁷¹ (Stier, 2006).

Many campus students force to quit or fail their education every academic year because of their inability to adapt the new social life in-campus. Even those who are able to continue in the campus, they still struggle to live a healthy life. We know one’s social relationship is highly dependent on his/her communication competence. However, since campus students are not informed about intercultural communication, we see the students facing difficulties.

Understanding the complementarities and dichotomized nature of the cultural communication of the people undoubtedly enable the peoples themselves to learn about similarity of cultural practices of one another and to develop a feeling that they share a lot with one another. They can understand their similarities and perceive that they are alike and can minimize their differences of opinion. When they realize that they will be initiated to share cultural practices, minimization of differences of opinion and interest can, in turn, help for obtaining easy social mobilization for sustainable development and peaceful relationships among the peoples.

To sum up, the Ethiopian universities are characterized by constituting students from different cultural backgrounds. The communication among

¹⁷¹ Stier, Internationalization, intercultural communication and intercultural competence, *Jonas Journal of Intercultural Communication*, Issue 11, 2006.

such students is crucial for the existence of successful learning-teaching, researching, and community servicing environment. However, the essence and the nature of communication among such culturally diverse students have not been investigated through the contemporary discourses, theories and methodologies of intercultural communication. In addition, the same issues have not been examined in terms of the internal (in-campus) and external (out-campus) factors affecting the students' intercultural communication in Southern section of Ethiopia. Thus, this study intends to analyze system of intercultural communication among students in Dilla and Hawassa Universities in Southern Ethiopia.

Research Questions

*As often happens, today's problems are solved in terms of yesterday's understanding.*¹⁷²

The research questions that this paper tried to address are:

1. Do university students recognize cultural differences during their interaction with other students from different cultural backgrounds?
2. How do students from different cultural backgrounds communicate with each other in the university's compounds?
3. What are the roles of in-campus and out-campus experiences in influencing the students' intercultural communication in their respective university's campus?
4. How do the members of the university's community such as leaders, office of student services, administrative offices, dormitory coordinators, instructors and other staff evaluate intercultural communication sensitivity level among the university students and the contribution of education and intercultural experience to create conducive environment in the campuses? and

¹⁷² A. Larry Samovar and Richard E. Porter, *Intercultural communication: A reader* (9th ed.), Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Inc., 2000, P.39.

5. How do university students react to things or ideas which are different from their culture?

Objectives of the Study

*The true test of civilization is not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops, -no, but the kind of man the country turns out.*¹⁷³ *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

This study aimed to analyze the system of intercultural communication among university students in Dilla and Hawassa Universities in Southern Ethiopia. It specifically tried to:

- Assess the university students' awareness of cultural differences during their interaction with other students from different cultural differences in the campuses;
- Describe the students' system of intercultural communication;
- Explore factors (internal and external) affecting effective intercultural communication in the university's compounds; and
- Evaluate the sensitivity level of intercultural communication of the university students and the contribution of education and intercultural experience to create conducive environment in Dilla and Hawassa Universities of Southern Ethiopia.

Research Methodology

The ethnographic and cultural approaches are complementary and together can help our understanding of breakdowns in intercultural communication (Jandt, 1998, p. 50).

¹⁷³ Typhon International Corp, *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of English Language: Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition*. Naples Florida: Trident Press International, 2004.

This study employed qualitative research methodology, as more flexible than quantitative methodology (Guest et al., 2005), while the data were drawn from both primary and secondary sources, albeit priority was given to primary sources of data.

This research project was conducted in Hawassa, Dilla, and Welayta Sodo Universities and the regular students were the study subjects. Narrative and story-telling, focus group discussions, and interviews (structured and unstructured) using interview guide/protocol as well as questionnaires as research instruments were employed for collecting primary data. As qualitative research method requires a descriptive way of presenting the qualitative data, the generated data on the students' daily manners of intercultural communication both inside and outside classrooms, their participation in different extracurricular activities, the existing university leaderships and other staff's administrative measures, student services, etc. were then explained accordingly. Purposive sampling technique (regarding the empirical data) was also applied to select as sampled schools, faculties and departments under the auspices of the respective university.

For the purpose of triangulation in the study, the following major groups of informant and/or respondent were the sources of pertinent data in order to make the findings of the study more visible and reliable ones. These research participants were:

1. Ethnic, religion, gender, and life style oriented student groups, who could provide reliable pieces of information to achieve the objectives of the research;

2. Officials in the student services, the respective university administrative body, dormitory coordinators; and
3. Instructors.

Theoretical Framework

*I'm for humanity. Let's work for it, since we are human beings-it should be our main identity. Let's make the world colorful with its different cultures. We have much to learn from others. We can enrich ourselves with other ideas, views, and thoughts. What is the use of living in stagnant pool like a little frog?*¹⁷⁴

Most of the time conflict between two cultures happens when they come together as a result of social interaction, but that do not mean we can prevent conflict by preventing them from students being interacted among them who are from different cultures. In the 21st century, when the world is becoming one village as a result of increased interaction, it is impossible for a community to live isolated from others. Even the stronger and modern nations are no longer self-supporting for their needs. If this is the reality, all we have to do is work for creating a healthy relationship between two cultures. Different cultural backgrounds are among the few causes of conflicts among the university students, according to Endrias Eshete (2010, i) for conflict origin and only through intercultural communication they can be managed and reduced. In his words, "Only by competently and peacefully interacting with others who are different from us can our global village survive."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Taslima Nasren, *Some Views about Intercultural Communication*.

¹⁷⁵ Necessity of Intercultural Communication, 2005.

Furthermore, different scholars give their various explanations about culture. Culture by its very nature has broad definitions, but to coin the research's working definition we first mention Igor Klyukanov (2005, p.9). As defined by Klyukanov, "Culture is a system of symbolic resources shared by a group of people. In every intercultural situation, groups of people with different systems of symbolic resources come into contact- that is, they communicate with each other."

In addition, Kessing's definition of culture as quoted by Gudykunst and Yunkim (2003, p. 15-16) is presented as follows:

We use Kessing's (1994) definition of culture conceived as a system of competency shared in its broad design and deeper principles' and varying between individuals in its specificities' is then not all of what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his/her world. It is his/her theory of what his/her fellows know, believe, and mean, his/her theory of the code being followed, the game being played, in the society in to which he/she was born.-we use our theories of the games being played in interacting with the people we encounter. Our theories tell us how to communicate with others and how to interpret their behavior. We use our theories to interpret unfamiliar things we come across. Generally, we are not aware of the rules of the game being played, but we behave as though there were general agreement on the rules.

Within the constructivist perspective, there is a general understanding that cultural identity is a form of social identity constructed in relation to other people in a given period of time. Some other author states, "Cultural identity is a core aspect of this welter of phenomena that confronts us. The term refers to a cultural identity that is based on a specific cultural configuration of a conscious nature. History, language and race are all possible bases for

cultural identity and they are all socially constructed realities” (Friedman 1994, p. 238).

For the detailed explanation of intercultural communication as a human process, the authors quote Igor Klyukanov’s definition of intercultural communication which is stated in his book titled *Principles of Intercultural Communication*. Klyukanov (2005, p. 21-258) states, “Intercultural communication is a process where people from different cultures define their collective identities, they meet together to reach a point of agreement that manifests common understanding for the benefit of all. It is a result of continuous negotiation that demands all parties to move a step towards a middle position and leave some of their prior position. Through intercultural communication, the interactants build an ability to learn from other cultures this leads to enriching their own. This process helps them to build trust, mutual understanding and tolerance. No one is a winner or loser when it comes to intercultural communication. If communicators across cultures agreed on the real business world facts and are acting according to their own culture based national boundaries will not be needed, it is believed that as if they were ideally unified.

As a process, intercultural communication is also defined in multiple ways. For example, Allwood (1985, p. 3) defines intercultural communication as “the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control among people with different cultural backgrounds, where different cultural backgrounds include both national cultural differences and differences which are connected with participation in the different activities that exist within a national unit.” Cultural, ideological, philosophical, political, etc. differences are constructed by the society regarding their walks of life for their use. Such differences come to terms with by continuous dialogue about intercultural

communication. Steve Butts in his article entitled “ Developing Intercultural Communication: A University Project” explained as: “at a practical level, intercultural communication is about to live with and manage as effectively as possible those who are not like you...the aim of intercultural communication is thus to create awareness and, more important, understanding, not agreement. This is particularly considered in terms of solving intercultural conflicts.”

The same author continued,

Every society has its own values, norms and rules which are basically the fruits of culture and members of a culture/society behave according to social norms and rules. This shows how culture affects our communication with others, directly through the values, norms and rules. Indirectly, our culture influences our communication by influencing individuals’ characteristics. As known, individual’s characteristics are built when he/she socializes himself/herself on day to day life. Our culture is reflected in our characteristics and, in turn, our communication with others is highly shaped by our characteristics. Based on the above realities, we can conclude that culture influences communication directly and indirectly. Lacking these qualities or misunderstanding about culture based differences directed to conflict, as a result communication barriers which could pollute the harmonized humanly environment.

This phenomenon is described by Fred E. Jandt as under:

Cultural nearsightedness often results in making assumptions that simple things are the same everywhere. It is common to see misunderstanding between members of different cultures more than we observe it between the same cultures. Scholars propose various causes of misunderstanding between members of different cultures. They call it barriers of intercultural communication. There are a number of barriers that create difficulty in intercultural communication which eventually leads to conflict. People need to be aware of these barriers, work out to communicate surpassing the barriers and establish mutual understanding.

Members from different cultures face uncertainty when they met for the first time. Neither of them knows what to forecast about the positions of others about an issue and the anxiety by itself makes intercultural communication difficult. Gudykunst and Kim (2003, p. 30) point out two types of uncertainty based on Berger and Calabrese's (1975) explanation. The first uncertainty is revolving around the stranger's attitudes, feelings, beliefs, values and behaviour.

Soliciting diversities and respecting cultural differences help for good understanding that have avoided barriers of communication as much as possible - if those barriers could avoid effective cultural communication would have been experienced. "In short, effective communication means minimizing misunderstanding. To be effective in communicating with strangers we must be mindful. In this case, effective and appropriate communication is an important aspect of being perceived as a competent communicator." Gudykunst and Yun Kim (2003, p. 271-272).

Once individuals from two cultures come together, communication becomes a must whether they like each other or not. According to the theory of Social Interactional View, Paul Watzlawick states: "One cannot say I do not want to communicate. It is impossible for people to stop communicating, even though both do not understand the other's language. "

Joan England argues that genuine communication is a condition of togetherness, in which people have lowered their defenses and learnt to live together. Any community develops this relationship when they are aware of the cultural differences, and anyone who wants to create peaceful relationship with others, has to build a communication system that allows culture sharing. Effective communication can ultimately lower or remove

walls and barriers of misunderstanding that separates human beings from one another.

One of the means of getting such an effective communicator in the universities' compounds as well as within their community is making and remaking a multicultural oriented society.

Multicultural education raises four significant issues: (1) Exposure to multicultural perspectives; (2) Maintaining cultural identity; (3) Developing intercultural communication skills; and (4) Diversification of curriculum...Academic exposure to multicultural environment will provide students with the skills to excel in the real world. As the business world adjusts its views to a changing society, the academic environment must do the same. Because students ultimately return to the world outside the school, the more fully they learn to recognize and respect differences in the beliefs, values and worldviews of people of varying cultural extraction, the more effectively will they promote a multicultural society beyond the classroom (Guo-Ming & Strasota, 1998, p. 226).

To do so, the Ethiopian higher learning institutions are working for creating such multicultural oriented citizens, as quoted even in the Higher Education Proclamation of Ethiopia (MoE, 2009, p. 3). The Proclamation stipulates,

The objectives of higher education are to prepare knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally mature graduates in numbers with demand-based proportional balance of fields and disciplines so that the country shall become internationally competitive; ensure that education and research promote freedom of expression based on reason and rational discourse; and promote democratic culture and uphold multicultural community life.

Universities' prior objective is to equip students with scientific knowledge that could bring change in a society, and they are trained to be physicians, engineers, journalists, astronomers, managers, teachers, accountants or others. Meanwhile, the students might be prepared to be competent in a

profession but if he/she fails to create good social relationship or interaction he/she becomes defective and fails to play constructive role in a society. Therefore, the universities should prepare their students even to an effective social life. At this point, education becomes critical to understand, work, live and to deal with those differences and should prepare students to deal with those cultural differences in today's global work environment where multinational eagerly seek for new graduates with intercultural competence to work either at home or abroad.¹⁷⁶

Data Presentation and Analysis

This part of the research presents data collected from the three universities during the study. The data is presented according to two main themes of the research. The first one theme deals with favourable conditions that facilitate intercultural communication, and discusses about the positive aspects of the universities in terms of bringing students together. The second part describes the barriers of intercultural communication among the students, factors creating barriers and obstacles in effective and appropriate students' relationships.

Favourable Conditions for Intercultural Communication

Clubs

There are more than 20 student clubs in the considered universities. Some of these clubs focus only on student relationships and other activities around different issues such as cultural, sports, open society discussion forum, and peace clubs. When students participate in these clubs their understanding about other members will definitely increase since the clubs improve

¹⁷⁶ UNESCO, *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, 2002, P. 44.

interactions between the members and other members of the campus community. In addition, the clubs arrange different events and actions in which all members of the campus community participate. These extra-curricula activities create opportunities for students to know better about his/her class- and room-mates. The events like music, dance, poems, dressing and other aspects of their culture are shared and taken from what students have observed at the events – shared aspects of culture are borrowed and taken back to their home places.

Before one club is established, it has to pass through some steps, and almost all of the clubs are the products of students' initiatives. Once a group of students initiates an idea to establish club, they present the proposal to student council which, in turn, send it to the Student Dean Office. After the proposal has been approved, the Dean's Office will send it to the Cultural Team, a team that controls clubs in the university.

Cultural Club

The Head of one Cultural Team in one of the Southern universities states that the Cultural Club in the university has been celebrating cultural values before the nation starts to celebrate the "day of nations and nationalities in Ethiopia". On this day, various cultural music shows are presented, and cultural clothes, food items and others are displayed by the students in those universities. The day brings special opportunities for the students to know the rich cultural heritages in the country, for creating a common place and agenda for all students that have come from different localities and departments.

Open Society Discussion Forum

The Open Society Discussion Forum Club is established aiming to promote discussion on various national issues in those sampled universities. On the Periodical Discussion Program, members of the university community such as students, academic and non-academic staff, university leaders and concerned government officials gather together to discuss current and controversial national issues. According to the President of Students' Council of one of the universities, prominent Ethiopians like Ato Neway Gebre-ab participated in this Discussion Program. The university community in each sample area benefits in many ways from the Discussion. Students get a chance to know deeper about the national issues. In addition, the Program helps the university students to create common ground in various walks of life.

Peace Club

As known, universities are the places we see many conflicts every year. This tells us that we should give our attention to this problem, but the problem can be solved when we work on it. One of the means to tackle the problem is to discuss on the causes of the problem and to find a better solution to the problem. Therefore, peace club is one of the crucial clubs every university needs to establish, as they work to create peaceful environment in the university.

Mini-Media Program

The mini-media operates under the 'The Anti-HIV/AIDS Club', and it is one of the strongest clubs in the universities under study, is supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Media gives priority in fighting

HIV/AIDS over other issues. Parallel to fighting HIV/AIDS, the Mini-Media Program also broadcasts different programs that touch the day to day activities of the university students in the campus. These programs cover issues on academic, sport, art, drama and many others that have strong effect on the students' relationships.

Discipline Team

The Discipline Team is established to control the disciplinary issues of the students in those universities. The Team deals all types of disciplinary problems, which range from simple individuals' disagreement to group level conflicts. The Discipline Team takes various measures based on the intensity of the disciplinary problem. From the track record of the Team, we could see that 80% of the students or cases that had come to the Discipline Team were handled simply by advising parties. The rest cases demanded the students' one semester or final dismissal from the respective university. Most of the students were found to commit misconduct which had emanated from lack of information about university's rules and culture, and are often results of differences between what students used to do in their localities and what they are experiencing in the universities.

The universities especially have disciplinary rules which stipulate that every student shall adhere to them. However, these rules sometime contradict to the provenience culture. Some of them are the following:

- i. The rule forbids students from chewing chat in the university compounds. But, for students that come from regions like Somali, Harar and Afar; chat is part of their tradition. For these students chewing chat is not a problem. In addition, they are used to it and it

becomes difficult to stop it right as they are told by university administrative.

- ii. Using some “words” are considered as verbal aggression, but the meaning of words differs from one society to one society. Since the university students have come from different cultural backgrounds, misunderstanding over the use of words occur occasionally.

Dormitory Service

Like most of other universities in the country, Hawassa University assigns students to dormitory based on alphabetical order. Sometimes, this assignment forces students to live with students who are not like them in terms of culture and behaviour. Consequently, frequent disputes occur around the dormitory, and within the block itself. In order to solve the problems, the students change their dormitory to live with their friends. This can help them to reduce dormitory disputes but cannot help the students in the long term. According to scholars in the field, people use various strategies to solve conflicts. Some use competitive styles to get their maximum interests, while others prefer to avoid the conflict by leaving the disputing area or issue. Both of these strategies cannot bring sustainable peace, rather they encourage people to use cooperative styles that enable conflicting parties to secure mutual interest. One of the ways to secure mutual interest is engaging in constant and honest communication. Therefore, instead of changing dormitory or forcing students to live in unfriendly environment, the management bodies in the sampled universities have to work seriously on discussion or communication among students.

Barriers to Communication

Lower Level of Information

Students are not well-aware of the university's walks of life, getting only some pieces of information about do's and don'ts, especially when they are first year (freshman) students. Lower level of information makes things difficult for students. At the beginning of registration of freshman students in each university, there is an orientation program which may give some highlights on university campus life to them, but it is not all inclusive, because the orientation is not teaching them how to do.

Differences in Cultural Background

Universities hold students that have come from all corners of the nation and, as we know, Ethiopia is a home for multicultural people. Every culture shapes its members based on its own values, norms, attitudes, ideological principles and life philosophies. Most students who have come from different cultural backgrounds act and think accordingly. Even if two students have similar interest on the same things, their way of expression and communication can be offensive to others.

Stereotype and Prejudice

Based on what they are told or heard at home place, some students have developed stereotypes and prejudice towards some groups of people. These students may be wrong in their perception of others.

Ethnicity and Religion

It is common to see students from similar ethnic or religious groups easily interact to each other; while students from different ethnic and religious groups face difficulty in interacting with other. This may emanate from being

suspicious or biased to other students. But most of the time, the difficulty originates from lack of well-established means of communication. Students who are socially active are seen communicating well with all groups of students but other students prefer to interact with only those who are similar to them to some other students because it is much easier for them.

Economic Status

Students are more likely to create friendship with those who have similar economic status. Even though it is not strong as ethnicity and religion, every individual economic status also creates boundary between students. Again, students need some catalysts that help them to change the long lasted attitudes and traditions.

Lack of Concern from the Management

University management is busy worrying about the academic activities of the respective universities and gives very little attention to the healthy relationships among their students. As the university management neglects the issue, it is getting more and more complicated.

Major Findings of the Study

1. Cultural differences play crucial role in the formation of friendship among students in higher education institutions.
2. Cultural differences also become the cause of conflict in the university campuses.
3. The management of the universities has neglected the influence of culture on the interaction among students or students and instructors.
4. The rules and regulations of the universities do not recognize the existence of various cultures inside the campus.

5. Extra-curricular activities play a tremendous role to improve students' relationships.
6. Students who have come from big cities are more effective in building strong relationships with large number of students because of their previous experiences in their home towns.
7. Prejudice and ethnocentrism also have their own impact on the nature of relationships that exist among students.
8. Multilingual students have better intercultural communication than others.
9. First year students have weak intercultural communication, whereas the graduating classes have good intercultural communication.
10. Even though politics has its own contribution, most of the conflicts among students in the university compounds are caused by misunderstanding or communication breakdown.

Recommendations

1. Higher education institutions should work hard in improving the intercultural communication competence of their students.
2. The institutions should plan and implement extra-curricular activities like sport, art, etc. to strength the friendships among their students at different levels.
3. Prejudice and stereotype mostly originate from lack of knowledge or information. Therefore, the concerned officials in the universities should try to improve the knowledge level of their students concerning multiculturalism or pluralism. This can be accomplished through dialogue, formal education, public lecture, and media, including entertainment on the mini-media program.

4. University officials should teach their students, especially freshman students about the reasons why they should do something or should not do something rather than simply imposing rules on them.
5. As the students spend most of their time inside their dormitories, the university management should create some mechanisms around dormitory buildings that can strengthen their interactions and communications like coffee ceremony, different types of competition among students residing in different dormitory buildings and entertainment programs.

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