

POSITIVE INTERSTUDENT COMMUNICATION AS FOUNDATION OF A SAFE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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<https://doi.org/10.54989/stusec.2026.20.01.05>

Abstract

This study examines how generally positive interstudent communication, non-serious conflict motives, and students' tolerance toward vulgar language contribute to a safe climate of interaction in the university environment. The case study is the University "Luigj Gurakuqi" in Shkodër, Albania, where interstudent communication is treated as an indicator of social and psychological safety on campus. The study is based primarily on a self-administered questionnaire with 89 structured items and 7 open-ended questions, completed by 135 students (110 bachelor's; 25 master's), and complemented by 11 informal student conversations used for contextualization. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and descriptive statistics, while open-ended responses helped enrich the interpretation of the findings.

The findings indicate that disagreements and conflicts occur at low levels and are generally perceived as rare and of peripheral importance. Comparative references to the wider national dataset further support the interpretation of the University of Shkodra as a relatively less conflictual university environment. Overall, predominantly positive communication is associated with freedom of expression without fear of prejudice. The study is situated within a broader national research framework conducted from May to October 2025, involving 1,144 students across 12 public universities in the Republic of Albania.

Keywords: interstudent communication; conflict motives; cultured language; vulgar language; safe environment

Introduction

Interaction and communication among students constitute an important component of the university experience, as they create peer-support networks that contribute to students' well-being and adjustment to the academic environment. Students shared participation in the university setting over several years fosters and develops a wide range of social relationships through communication, interaction, perceptions, and even mutual prejudices. Students come to university with different experiences, values, and ways of approaching academic tasks, which may lead to misunderstandings and tension. Miscommunication, misunderstandings, or differences in approaches to problem-solving may arise².

In university settings, psychological safety refers to the perception that lecture halls and interaction spaces are places where students can express themselves freely, share

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² David Nadler Prata, *The Role of a Help Requester in Collaborative Learning*, "International Journal of Information and Education Technology", Vol. 6, No. 11, 2016, pp. 859-862, <https://doi.org/10.7763/IJiet.2016.V6.805>

opinions, ask questions, and participate in discussions without being judged or “penalized” by others. This perception is often built gradually through routine everyday communication and may remain implicit rather than becoming an explicit topic of conversation¹. Espelage et al. argue that positive relationships between instructors and students contribute to a safer climate and to stronger perceptions of safety in lecture halls. Uncivil communication may occur when a student does not feel accepted, respected, or treated equally compared to others, given that uncivil communication, among other things, can be a response individuals display to different forms of social insecurity².

Some authors argue that having strong social support facilitates cooperation among individuals; the better peer relationships are, the higher the quality of cooperation in pursuing shared goals³. One of Piispanen’s key findings in her doctoral dissertation, which examines learning environments, is that a good learning environment is a safe environment⁴. A safe university environment may be understood as a social climate in which students experience everyday interaction as respectful, inclusive, and free from exclusion or negative judgment. In higher education, students’ perceptions of psychological safety are closely associated with peer interaction and collaborative learning contexts. In this sense, positive interstudent communication may be interpreted as an important relational dimension of a safe university environment⁵.

Positive interstudent communication is approached in this study not simply as the absence of conflict, but as a sociologically significant indicator of a safe university environment. Within this perspective, psychological safety, social cohesion, trust, and everyday communication are understood as closely interconnected dimensions of university life. A safe university environment is thus conceived as a relational climate in which everyday interaction reproduces mutual respect, communicative restraint, and confidence among students, while containing tensions within socially manageable limits.

Methodology

The University “Luigj Gurakuqi” of Shkodër was selected as a relevant case within Albanian higher education. As the principal public university in northern Albania, it attracts students mainly from the north of the country, but also from other regions and, to a lesser extent, from neighbouring contexts. Its inclusion is also relevant because public perceptions and cultural stereotypes have sometimes associated northern Albania with stronger forms of conflictual behaviour; however, the findings of this study point instead to a relatively stable and less conflictual interstudent climate. The case is also situated within the author’s broader

¹ Amy C. Edmondson, *Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams*, “Administrative Science Quarterly”, Vol. 44, 1999, pp. 350–383, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999>

² Dorothy L. Espelage, Joshua R. Polanin, Sabina K. Low, *Teacher and Staff Perceptions of School Environment as Predictors of Student Aggression, Victimization, and Willingness to Intervene in Bullying Situations*, “School Psychology Quarterly”, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2014, pp. 287–305, <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000072>

³ G. Wang, W. Hu, *Peer Relationships and College Students’ Cooperative Tendencies: Roles of Interpersonal Trust and Social Value Orientation*, “Frontiers in Psychology”, Vol. 12, 2021, p. 2, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.656412>

⁴ Maarika Piispanen, *Hyvä oppimisympäristö: Oppilaiden, vanhempien ja opettajien hyvinvointien kohtaaminen peruskoulussa*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Jyväskylä, Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius, 2008, <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-4871-9> (21.04.2026)

⁵ Nicolaj Riise Clausen, et al., *First-Year University Students’ Perspectives on Their Psychological Safety in PBL Teams*, “Education Sciences”, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2025, p. 236, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15020236>

doctoral research on student conflicts across 12 public universities in the Republic of Albania.

The primary method of data collection was a survey, designed on the basis of a preliminary review of theories of communication, behaviour, and youth conflicts. The questionnaire included 89 structured questions with 343 response options, as well as seven open-ended questions. It was pilot-tested in advance with students at the University of Tirana. The 135 students included in this article were surveyed through in-classroom administration until the planned institutional sub-sample was reached. This sub-sample formed part of a wider national research design targeting 1,146 students, of whom 1,144 provided valid questionnaires. Of the 135 respondents at the University of Shkodër, 110 were bachelor's students and 25 were master's students.

Questionnaire data were entered into Excel and subsequently analysed in SPSS. In addition, 11 informal conversations with students were conducted in order to capture more nuanced views on the issues under study. These conversations served as a complementary qualitative source and helped contextualise the quantitative findings by reflecting conversational openness and the generally friendly tone of interstudent and institutional interaction. They also strengthened the sociological interpretation of the data through selected student accounts, including illustrative elements drawn from conversations with students of the University of Shkodër. "The analysis of conversations often covers what may appear to be merely peripheral details of everyday life, yet these can be highly significant in sociological research. Ultimately, conversations are universal features of social activity."¹ Such conversations enriched the survey data.

The institutional sub-sample included 30 bachelor's students from the Department of Economics, 35 bachelor's students from the Department of Finance, 25 master's students from the Faculty of Economics, and 45 bachelor's students from the Faculty of Law. The surveyed students were enrolled at different stages of study, from the first year of the bachelor's programme to the second year of the master's programme. Two limitations should be acknowledged: not all faculties of the university were represented in the sub-sample, and the relatively small size of the institutional sub-sample limits broader generalisation of the findings.

Results: Communication Topics and Student Worldviews

Communication is a human activity that everyone recognizes, but few can define satisfactorily². Intergenerational communication has continuously undergone significant changes, shaped by broader social developments. One may reasonably assume that in 1981, two students at the Faculty of Political and Legal Sciences at the University of Tirana could not discuss political issues or electoral campaigns outside "official frameworks", because such discussions were impossible under a socio-political system dominated by a single party, the Party of Labour of Albania, which functioned as a party-state. Moreover, conversations with even slight oppositional political overtones could lead to serious legal trouble, including imprisonment.

The American communication scholar George N. Gordon defines communication as "the process of exchanging meanings among individuals through a shared system of symbols"³. The following data on students at the University of Shkodër should be understood

¹ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 5th Ed. Cambridge Polity Press, 2006, p. 225

² John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, Routledge, London, 2010, p. 1

³ Glenn N. Gordon, *Communication*, "Encyclopaedia Britannica", <https://www.britannica.com/topic/communication> (21.01.2026)

in relation to their worldview and the shared system of symbols and meanings that shape contemporary social life, serving as an indicator not only for young people at this university but, in a broader sense, also for other young people in the Republic of Albania, in line with the social dynamics of the time.

Accordingly, to the question “What is the topic you discuss most with your closest friends”?, students responded as shown in the following table:

Topic	Bachelor n (%)	Master n (%)
About coursework	43	41
Literature	0	0
Films	5	0
Politics	14	8
Economics	11	12
Social media	20	18
Specific TV programs	3	16
Other	4	5
Total	100	100

Table 1. Topics that students most often discuss with their close friends in the faculty¹

It is worth analysing, as a characteristic of students at the University of Shkodër, the fact that a considerable share of them around 11% report engaging frequently in communication about political issues, sometimes with passion and elevated tones that resemble a fan-like attitude. I also encountered this myself as a researcher during the survey process: two female students wrote at the end of the blank sheet attached to the questionnaire asking whether I supported their preferred political party. Other students would start political debates in the lecture hall as soon as one mentioned the development of tourism in the city of Shkodër, voicing both support for and opposition to local and central government policies.

Informal conversations with students suggested that political debates may at times become heated, but they were generally perceived as expressions of partisanship rather than as conflicts that escalate into real confrontation. The absence of literature as a reported topic of discussion suggests that extracurricular reading occupies a limited place in students' everyday peer communication.

Audio-visual media are also followed by fewer students compared to social networks. The place that specific TV programmes and films once held as a form of entertainment for the Millennial generation (those born from 1981 to 1996) appears, among Generation Z, to have been replaced by discussions about social media. Generation Z includes individuals born in 1995 or later, who have not experienced a world without digital technology². The

¹ Author's research

² Nada Ameen, Amandeep Anand, *Generation Z in the United Arab Emirates: A Smart-Tech-Driven iGeneration*, “The New Generation Z in Asia: Dynamics, Differences, Digitalisation”, Eds. Evrim Gentina, Emma Parry, Emerald Publishing, Bingley, 2020, pp. 181–192, <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-220-820201018>

time once largely devoted to television as a mass source of information is now increasingly taken up by the global electronic network, which offers numerous platforms for information and entertainment.

The largest share of students, about 42% on average, state that they most often talk about their studies. The percentage shown in Table 1 should not be interpreted only as evidence of sustained interest in academic advancement. It also reflects students' practical need to stay informed about lecture notes, assignments, and course updates through their peers. Peer groups in which such conversations are a continuous topic are often regarded as friendships built around mutual professional interests. The indicator above points to dense interstudent cooperation in joint academic projects, thereby significantly strengthening the perception of a safe and welcoming university environment.

Students' Perceptions of Communication Vocabulary

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."¹ This refrain from a pop song among young people could not be more wrong. Words cannot literally break people's bones, but they are powerful weapons that can leave psychological scars just as sticks and stones can leave physical marks. Perceptions of the level of vocabulary used in communication among university students help us understand the students' worldviews and the ways they show respect for themselves and others during everyday conversations. Accordingly, to the question, "How do you assess the vocabulary used in daily communication among students?", their responses are summarized in the following table:

Category	Bachelor n (%)	Master n (%)
Vulgar	7	33
Somewhat vulgar	31	7
Normal	57	45
Cultured	5	15
Total	100	100

Table 2. Everyday communication vocabulary, by study cycle²

It is worth analysing the "vulgar" indicator in the table, where 7% of bachelor's students and 33% of master's students consider the vocabulary used in their everyday communication to be vulgar.

Typically, with age, evaluative capacity improves, as does sensitivity to carelessly articulated words with vulgar connotations compared to younger ages. Nevertheless, the combined values for the "vulgar" and "somewhat vulgar" indicators are very similar around 38% among bachelor's students and 40% among master's students. These indicators point to a communication climate that requires institutional attention. The study by Ukhtinabila and Sholikhah, conducted with students at three universities in East Java, Indonesia, shows that the use of vulgar language in student conversations is associated with the expression of

¹ Stephen E. Lucas, *The Art of Public Speaking*, 11th Ed, McGraw-Hill, New York, 2011, p. 34

² Author's research

emotions, humour, social closeness, and peer influence¹. In a similar vein, students at the University of Shkodra also display a relatively high level of tolerance toward this type of language. However, in the Albanian case, vulgar language appears not only as an element of social interaction, but also as a problematic indicator of communication ethics, particularly from the perspective of master's students. Master's students, owing to their greater emotional maturity, appear to approach the use of vulgar language more seriously. Although they may express disapproval toward such language and toward those who employ it, this attitude does not appear to translate into overt conflict.

These findings may be further interpreted in light of Sulpizio et al., who examined taboo language across 13 languages and 17 countries using data from 1,046 participants in Study 1 and semantic ratings from 455 participants in Study 2. Their results indicate that taboo words are typically characterized by extremely low valence, high arousal, and very low written frequency, but also by substantial cross-country variation in perceived taboo-ness and offensiveness. From this perspective, the higher proportion of master's students identifying everyday vocabulary as vulgar may reflect a more developed evaluative awareness rather than only a difference in actual communicative behaviour².

A cross-cultural study based on a 2018–2019 online survey of 518 respondents from Russia, Poland, the United States, and Ukraine found important differences in attitudes toward vulgar language among young people: tolerance was highest in Russia and Poland, whereas Ukrainian and American respondents displayed more negative attitudes overall, although Americans remained relatively more tolerant of its personal use.³ Accordingly, Albanian students also appear to be more similar to young Americans and Ukrainians in terms of their lower tolerance of vulgar language used by others, while being more tolerant of its personal use among peers. Vulgar language is not ethical because it devalues people⁴. Such language is also a socially destructive force. A considerable proportion of bachelor's students consider even vulgar conversations to be normal. This is also evidenced by the fact that, although bachelor's students are more numerous, they rated conversations characterized by a cultured vocabulary at a minimal level of only 5%. Meanwhile, master's students reported, at a rate three times higher, around 15%, that communication among them is cultured.

To be ethical and to speak with civility means to behave ethically at all times, not only when it is convenient⁵. From the informal conversations with students, it was confirmed that vulgar language is to some extent considered “trendy” and is not viewed as particularly problematic; in fact, it is often perceived as a way of being included in a closer social circle.

Density of conflicts with female students

Given that female students make up more than 80% of the student body, the frequency of conflicts involving female students needs to be examined in order to analyse

¹ Frida Ukhtinabila, Masriatus Sholikhah, Unveiling the University Students' Motive of Using Taboo Words in Daily Conversation, “JEELL: Journal of English Education, Linguistics and Literature”, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2026, pp. 37–51, <https://doi.org/10.32682/jeell.v13i1.133>

² Simone Sulpizio, et al., Taboo Language across the Globe: A Multi-Lab Study, “Behavior Research Methods”, Vol. 56, No. 4, 2024, pp. 3794–3813, <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-024-02376-6>

³ Natalia Tavrovetska, Victoria Shebanova, *Cross-Cultural Research of the Use of Obscene Language in the Youth Environment*, “Psycholinguistics”, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2020, pp. 239–266, <https://doi.org/10.31470/2309-1797-2020-28-1-239-266>

⁴ Stephen E. Lucas, *The Art of Public Speaking*, 11th Ed, McGraw-Hill, New York, 2011, p. 66

⁵ *Idem*, p. 67

whether it is girls or boys who experience conflicts more often with female students. When asked, “How often have you been in conflict with female students in the same cycle of study?”, students responded as shown in the following table:

Frequency	Bachelor (%)			Master (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Never	54	11	65	54	12	66
Rarely	21	3	24	14	12	26
Often	6	1	7	8	0	8
Almost always	3	1	4	0	0	0
Total	84	16	100	76	24	100

Table 3. Conflicts with female students, by gender and study cycle¹

As shown in the corresponding charts, the values of all variables measuring the density of conflicts with female students are almost the same among bachelor’s- and master’s-level students. As expected, female students report conflicts with other female students more often than male students do; the density of conflicts among female students with other females is seven times higher than that of male students.

This pattern is not accidental, since female students are more directly exposed to one another in everyday academic life, and such proximity may increase the likelihood of misunderstandings, comparison, and interpersonal tension.

Among master’s students, the indicators of conflicts with female students are more balanced in terms of the female–male ratio, also because master’s courses typically include around 15–20 students, where the gender ratio is narrower than in bachelor’s studies, and the values translate into higher levels for each indicator. It is worth emphasizing that, on average, about 66% of students stated that they do not have conflicts with female students. This is an indicator that can be considered normal given the different dynamics and motives for conflict in a society that is still experiencing pronounced problems due to a prolonged transition over the past 35 years.

At the level of inter-university comparison within the broader national study of 12 public universities, these findings gain sociological significance when the University of Shkodra is compared with the University of Arts. At the University of Shkodra, both female and male students are concentrated mainly in the category “Never” (64.4% and 69.2%, respectively), indicating that non-conflict constitutes the dominant pattern of interaction with female peers within the same cycle of study. At the University of Arts, by contrast, the corresponding shares are much lower (28.6% and 20.0%), while conflict is more concentrated in the higher-intensity categories. The contrast is most evident among male students, for whom the category “Often” reaches 53.3% at the University of Arts, compared with only 3.8% at the University of Shkodra.² This difference is particularly significant given that the

¹ Author’s research

² Author’s calculations based on the national survey database covering 12 public universities in the Republic of Albania.

University of Arts is located in Tirana, the country's principal academic and urban centre, whereas the University of Shkodra is situated in northern Albania, within a more peripheral academic context. In comparative terms, therefore, the University of Shkodra displays a more regulated and less conflictual pattern of interstudent relations. This comparison should not be read as an institutional ranking, but as an indication that different academic, urban, and disciplinary environments may produce different patterns of interstudent interaction.

Motives for conflicts among female students

Beyond conflict frequency, the analysis also considers the reasons students associate with these tensions.

Motive	Bachelor (%)			Master (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Occasional misunderstandings	44	9	53	20	10	30
Gossip	15	2	17	30	0	30
Prejudices	8	0	8	0	10	10
Unfair competition	5	3	8	20	0	20
Group dominance	14	0	14	0	10	10
Total	86	14	100	70	30	100

Table 4. Motives for conflicts with female students, by gender and study cycle¹

Among bachelor's students, misunderstandings in communication appear as the principal cause of conflict, reported by 53% of respondents, including 44% female and 9% male students. The same motive remains the leading one among master's students as well, although at a lower level (30%). This finding is consistent with Nakata, Vuopala, and Weinberger's study of university students in Finland, which identifies misunderstandings in communication as a key source of conflict in collaborative student interaction².

In the open-ended question, where they described the issues they encounter in everyday life within university settings, students emphasized a lack of tolerance in communication. Gossip also accounts for a considerable share among female students: around 15% of them stated that they have been involved in conflicts because of things said about them behind their backs or in their absence. Scholar Artan Fuga cites an interesting expression about people who speak badly of others: "He always speaks sincerely, because he speaks behind people's backs"³. Another notable indicator is conflict arising from attempts to dominate the group. Among bachelor's students, this motive accounts for around 14% of conflicts among female students, whereas male students do not report such conflicts. This may also reflect the increasing presence of girls and women in leadership roles in Albanian society and, by extension, in student group dynamics.

¹ Author's research

² Azusa Nakata, Essi Vuopala, Armin Weinberger, *Conflict Experiences and Management Strategies in Intercultural Collaborative Learning*, "Research in Comparative and International Education", Vol. 20, No. 2, 2025, pp. 291–313, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999251329258>

³ Artan Fuga, *Komunikimi në shoqërinë masive*, Papirus, Tiranë, 2014, p. 191

In the government and public administration of the Republic of Albania, over 45% of leadership positions are held by women¹. In the field of education in the 2023-24 academic year, women predominate among teaching staff in nine-year basic education and in upper secondary education, accounting for approximately 79.1% and 71.0% of teachers at each level, respectively. At the higher education level, among full-time academic staff, women holding the title of Professor make up about 51.4%, while those holding the title of Doctor account for about 61.6%².

Zyhdi Dervishi has argued that, in many offices of social and non-public institutions, the rough, cunning, and at times enigmatic faces of men are being replaced by the more delicate faces of young female or women employees, who generally appear more inclined to address the various problems that concern citizens with greater dedication and correctness, in accordance with legal criteria³. Among master's-level students, the distribution of indicators is more linear, with conflicts due to occasional misunderstandings decreasing by about 23% in specific share compared with bachelor's-level students. Master's students are older and more mature, and therefore less likely to engage in conflicts over misunderstandings that most often arise from inappropriate wording in communication.

Among master's students, conflicts linked to gossip appear more frequent, suggesting a greater tendency to communicate dissatisfaction indirectly within trusted circles, which may in turn generate interpersonal tension. Unlike male bachelor's students, the situation is different among master's students, who showed little interest in competition and in dominating the group. Male master's students are just as interested and competitive as female master's students with regard to conflicts based on unfair competition and group dominance.

These motives indicate that conflicts among female students arise mainly from everyday communicative frictions and informal peer dynamics rather than from deep or persistent antagonisms. Such disagreements appear to be absorbed within ordinary peer interaction and therefore do not substantially weaken students' perception of psychological safety. In this sense, they reflect limited and socially contained tensions rather than a disruption of the broader safe university environment.

Frequency	Bachelor (%)			Master (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Never	65	14	79	63	16	79
Rarely	11	1	13	11	6	17
Often	3	2	5	2	2	4
Almost always	2	1	3	0	0	0
Total	81	18	100	76	24	100

Table 5. Density of conflicts with male students. Conflicts with male students, by gender and study cycle⁴

¹ Radio Televizioni Shqiptar, *Nga 2016–2024 rritet me 13.3% pjesëmarrja e grave në bordet drejtuese*, <https://rtsh.al/nga-2016-2024-rritet-me-13-3-pjesemarrja-e-grave-ne-bordet-drejtuese/> (21.02.2026)

² INSTAT, *Women and Men in Albania 2025*, Tirana, 2025, p. 2, <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/f4lhllkw/women-and-men-in-albania-2024.pdf> (21.02.2026)

³ Zyhdi Dervishi, *Gratë në turbulencat e mendësive dhe realiteti politik*, Shtëpia Botuese “Emal”, Tiranë, 2011, p. 249

⁴ Author's research.

As shown in Table 5, conflicts with male students are reported less frequently than conflicts with female students in Table 3. The share reporting “Never” is 79% for conflicts with male students, compared with 65–66% for conflicts with female students, a difference of about 13–14 percentage points. Female students report fewer conflicts with male students than with other female students. Male students also report relatively low levels of conflict with male peers, with the category “Never” remaining dominant in both cycles of study. In traditional Albanian society, conflicts between girls and boys were almost impossible. Boys could frequently come into conflict with one another, but not with girls. A reminiscence of the past is still present in the mentality of Albanian youth: that boys should not “get involved with girls and women,” because conflict with them is not seen as a sign of masculinity.

Although male students represent a smaller share of the student body in both universities 20.5% at the University of Shkodra and 41.7% at the University of Arts conflicts involving male peers remain important for assessing the wider pattern of interstudent relations. Among female students, 81.2% at the University of Shkodra reported “Never,” compared with 28.6% at the University of Arts. Among male students, 73.1% at the University of Shkodra reported “Never,” whereas at the University of Arts the dominant response was “Rarely” (66.7%). Taken together with the findings on conflicts involving female students, where “Never” also predominated at the University of Shkodra among both female students (64.4%) and male students (69.2%), these indicators support the interpretation of the University of Shkodra as a relatively safer university environment, marked by more regulated and less conflictual interstudent relations¹.

Motives	Bachelor (%)			Master (%)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Occasional misunderstandings	38	19	57	22	13	35
Gossip	14	0	14	0	0	0
Prejudices	15	4	19	0	0	0
Attempts to dominate the group	10	0	10	0	0	0
Prejudices about clothing	0	0	0	30	0	30
Prejudice about behavior	0	0	0	20	0	20
Prejudice based on religious beliefs	0	0	0	5	10	15
Total	77	23	100	77	23	100

Table 6. Motives for conflicts with male students, by gender and study cycle²

The main motive for conflicts with male students is occasional misunderstandings. Among bachelor’s students, this motive accounts for 57% of reported cases, with 38%

¹ Author’s calculations based on the national survey database covering 12 public universities in the Republic of Albania

² Author’s research

reported by female students and 19% by male students. However, when read within each gender group, misunderstandings represent about 49% of the motives reported by female bachelor students and about 83% of those reported by male bachelor students. This shows that male bachelor students are proportionally more likely to associate conflicts with male peers with misunderstandings.

Among master's students, occasional misunderstandings remain the main source of conflict, with only slight differences between female and male students. Another indicator of interest appears in the variable where a minority about 5% of females and about 10% of males state that they have experienced conflict due to prejudices they felt regarding their religious faith. It should be noted that Shkodër is among the cities where sensitivity toward religious beliefs is higher than in other parts of the Albanian-speaking area. With reference to conflicts with male students, male respondents do not report gossip as a motive at either level of study.

Among female bachelor's students, gossip appears as a secondary source of conflict in relations with both male and female peers, reported at about 14% and 15%, respectively. Even so, occasional misunderstandings in communication remain the main source of conflict, while gossip seems to play a more limited role in everyday student relations. In his study on students in secondary schools, among other things, Zyhdi Dervishi stated: "We believe that in the future, the extent of conflict among adolescents and young people under the pressure of gossip and prejudices will decrease significantly as a result of the influence of modern and postmodern developments¹".

Also, among the main causes of conflicts encountered by residents in the Kamëz community migrants who have arrived from across the Republic of Albania sociologist Alfred Halilaj mentions misunderstandings in communication². Among master's students, gossip does not appear as a reported motive for conflicts with male students. Instead, prejudices related to clothing and behaviour together account for 50% of the reported motives, and these are reported only by female students. More specifically, prejudices about clothing account for 30% of the reported motives among master's students, while prejudice about behaviour accounts for 20%; both indicators are reported only by female students.

The low density of conflicts with male students also supports the view that the university environment remains safe, as disagreements do not appear to escalate beyond heated debates into more serious conflict.

Discussions

Most students at the University of Shkodra have never had conflicts with fellow students. Conflicts are not frequent, but they are a concern among 25% of students, and they arise mostly as a result of occasional misunderstandings in communication, gossip, and various types of prejudices. Female students have conflicts more frequently with one another than with male students; misunderstandings are the main cause. These findings show that a safe university environment does not mean the absence of conflict, but a setting in which disagreements remain limited, socially contained, and unlikely to escalate.

One relevant sociological explanation for why these findings emerge in the University of Shkodra is that locally embedded norms of communication tend to discourage the open escalation of interpersonal tensions. In Shkodran folk speech, for instance, one encounters the

¹ Zyhdi Dervishi, *Adoleshentët, bashkëjetesë me demonët e konflikteve*, Shtëpia Botuese "Emal", Tiranë, 2013, p. 93

² Alfred Halilaj, *Zhvillime urbane, tradita dhe risi: Rasti i Kamzës*, West Print, Tiranë, 2021, p. 162

phraseological expression “të hyftë vetja në qejf,”¹ used in response to individuals who insult, speak in an imposing manner, or deliberately provoke confrontation. Rather than entering into direct conflict, the speaker symbolically neutralizes the interaction through a culturally coded response that allows tension to subside without immediate escalation. This form of expression may be viewed as a local communicative mechanism of conflict avoidance, reflecting a broader tendency to contain, rather than intensify, everyday interpersonal friction.

Regarding the level of language used, about 7% of bachelor’s students and about 33% of master’s students consider everyday communication to be vulgar. This difference indicates greater sensitivity toward communication with fellow students, shaped by increasing maturity with age and academic progress. Including those who evaluate communication as “somewhat vulgar,” around 40% of students in both study programs agree that the ethics of the language used in communication is problematic. Only about 5% of bachelor’s students and about 15% of those in the master’s program consider the language used in communication to be cultured. Careless and vulgar language may create communicative tension, although students appear to show a high level of tolerance.

These findings indicate that, at the University of Shkodra, everyday disagreements are generally absorbed within ordinary peer interaction and do not appear to develop into persistent or intensified conflict. The comparison with the University of Arts adds further support to this interpretation, showing that the University of Shkodra is characterized by lower levels of more intense conflict in relation to both female and male peers. In this sense, positive interstudent communication can be seen as an indicator of a safer and more stable university environment.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The central finding of this study is that the University of Shkodra displays a relatively safe interstudent climate, not because conflict is absent, but because disagreements remain mostly rare, communicatively contained, and socially manageable. Based on survey data from 135 students at the University of Shkodra, complemented by informal student conversations, the study shows that student communication is shaped mainly by academic concerns, with course-related topics being the most frequent subject of discussion among close friends in both bachelor’s and master’s cycles. Social media also occupies an important place in peer interaction. Misunderstandings remain the main source of conflict, while the perception of everyday language as vulgar or somewhat vulgar points to a communication climate that still requires institutional attention. From the perspective of educational security, even relatively infrequent conflicts may weaken psychological safety, reduce classroom participation, and increase pressure on student support structures. This concern is consistent with recent research that treats student conflicts not only through their causes, but also through their consequences for the academic environment.²

To address these risks, the study recommends regular surveys on communication climate and safety, a confidential reporting channel, trained peer mentors, restorative mediation, and a clear policy for online communication. These measures may strengthen prevention, student well-being, and institutional stability. Since the findings are based on

¹ Arvit Bushati, *Rinia në Shkodër Ramës: Të ka hypur vetja në qejf!*, “Perqasje”, September 16, 2016, <https://perqasje.com/2016/09/rinia-ne-shkoder-rames-te-ka-hypur-vetja-ne-qejf/> (21.04.2026)

² Brunilda Zenelaga, Sherif Dervishi, Chiara Masaro, Ján Gabčo, Ervin Weiss, *Exploring Causes and Consequences of University Students’ Conflicts: A Scoping Review*, “Journal of Education Culture and Society”, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2025, p. 646, <https://doi.org/10.15503/jecs2025.3.643.657>

self-reported data from a single institution, they should be interpreted carefully and confirmed through broader future studies.

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