PERCEIVED CORRELATION BETWEEN COMMUNICATION STYLES AND INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: A good and fulfilling relationship among individuals from distinct cultural backgrounds depends on effective communication. This research examined the perceived relationship between communication styles and interpersonal conflict resolution among international students in Malaysian universities.

Methodology: The study employed a cross-sectional survey in which self-developed structured questionnaires were used to gather data from a random sample of 324 international students in 15 higher institutions across Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis.

Findings: The findings of this study revealed a significant positive relationship between communication styles and interpersonal conflict resolution among international students. Specifically, passive, passive-aggressive, and assertive communication styles have a significant positive relationship with conflict resolution. However, the aggressive communication style exerts an insignificant effect on conflict resolution with a t-value of 0.734 and a P-value of 0.463. Thus, the students generally believe

this style does not help to resolve interpersonal conflict. These outcomes suggest the students' readiness for cultivating a peaceful learning environment.

Contributions: This study provides relevant information that can help educational decision-makers to strengthen cross-cultural collaboration among international students in the Malaysian context. This valuable information can also facilitate successful academic, professional, and social cooperation.

Keywords: Cross-cultural relationship, interpersonal conflict resolution, communication styles, international students, Malaysia.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most crucial elements of interpersonal relationships (Griggio et al., 2019; Horan et al., 2021; Chandra, Mohammadnezhad, & Ward, 2018). Tang and Chan (2021) stated that a successful interpersonal relationship depends on efficient communication, which is the foundation of a solid connection. Effective communication helps better understand one another to reach agreements on particular concerns. In particular, effective communication can help individuals from distinct social and cultural backgrounds, including international students, to develop trust and commitment as well as academic and social relationships with the host culture (Hassan et al., 2021; Musheke & Phiri, 2021; Nurullayevna, 2020). Therefore, effective communication is a critical aspect of a relationship.

In Malaysia, greater effort is needed to enhance understanding as the number of international students has been increasing significantly. In 2022, international student applications to study in Malaysian universities increased by 27.5% compared with the number of applications received in 2021 (International Consultants for Education and Fairs, 2023). The top leading countries include China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, and Nigeria, while the number of students from Bangladesh, Nigeria, and India grows faster than ever before. However, research shows that major challenges faced by international students include culture shock, social and personal relationships as well as communication difficulties (Alavi & Mansor, 2011; Mahmud et al., 2010; Singh, 2021).

At times, misconceptions occur among international students, and perhaps between them and the host community due to various communication-related issues, including cultural differences, lack of familiarity with local customs, and limited social interactions. Cultures differ in their preferred communication styles, which can lead to messages being interpreted differently based on cultural expectations (Singh, 2021). These cultural communication problems highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity, mutual understanding, and effective communication strategies to bridge the gap between international students and local Malaysians. This is because addressing these challenges through proactive measures and fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment can help international students and local Malaysians enhance their interactions, bridge cultural gaps, and develop meaningful relationships.

In particular, effective communication helps international students to interact with local people and better understand the local culture (Duck & Miell, 2021; Mahmud et al., 2010). However, very few studies were conducted to investigate the challenges faced by international students in Malaysia. The studies merely focused on issues concerning cultural communication strategies (e.g., Mahmud et al., 2010; Alavi & Mansor, 2011; Singh, 2021). None of these studies has attempted to examine the perceived connection between interpersonal communication styles and conflict resolutions, which the current study aims to investigate.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The majority of international students who choose to study in Malaysia originate from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, while only a small proportion come from Europe. Simultaneously, this phenomenon has given rise to fresh subcultures in the country. Particular cities, such as Kuala Lumpur, are characterized by a large number of international students due to the presence of diverse international communities, universities, colleges, and residential areas catering to international residents, as well as wide-ranging shopping venues and restaurants serving international communities. The presence of international students is expected to play a significant role in fostering social, economic, and political connections between Malaysia and various nations. Hence, the Malaysian government actively backs the promotion of cultural diversity through the process of internationalization (Mahmud et al, 2010).

Despite the implementation of supportive policies and the development of impressive infrastructure to facilitate internationalization, there remain certain aspects that can be perceived as challenges for international students. For instance, cultural differences due to

diverse socio-cultural backgrounds make interactions a significant challenge. Specific observable values in the Malay culture include "shyness, limited expression of feelings, respect for others, and a collectivistic lifestyle" (Mahmud et al., 2010, p. 290), which can be wrongly interpreted by some international subcultures. A foreigner may expect to enjoy a certain kind of treatment.

Specifically, very few studies were conducted to examine the challenges faced by international students in Malaysia. For instance, Alavi and Mansor (2011) used a survey method to ascertain the most significant challenges among 135 international students at a Malaysian public university. The findings revealed that significant challenges faced by international students include social and recreational relations. Similarly, the study conducted by Mahmud et al. (2010) employed focus group interviews to explore the challenges experienced by international students in the Malaysian context. The study found different themes, including culture. Another effort was made by Singh (2021) using interviews to explore the important resilience approaches adopted by international students to overcome challenges while studying in Malaysia. According to the study, "understanding the resilience strategies adopted by postgraduate international students in Malaysia has imperative implications for all universities" (p. 129).

To the best of our knowledge, there is a dearth of literature concerning the challenges faced by international students in the Malaysian context, particularly its relationship with communication styles. Research indicates that "limited research has been conducted on how international students overcome the challenges they face" (Singh, 2021, p. 129). Therefore, the current research focuses on the perceived relationship between communication styles and interpersonal conflict resolution among international students in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

2.1 Conflict Resolution and Effective Communication

A dispute or contention between two or more parties is a conflict (Sifianou, 2019). It frequently entails a disagreement or conflict between two or more persons and may include efforts to persuade, negotiate, or influence someone else's opinion in various ways. Conflict is a term that is frequently used to describe conditions or situations in which two or more parties are at odds with one another or are having trouble getting along. However, there are several varieties of conflict, and some are more appropriate in particular situations than others. According to Amsler, Martinez, and Smith (2020), the word conflict is often used interchangeably with the word disagreement, but there is much more to conflict than just disagreements.

Conflict can occur anywhere but most often in relationships, such as between parents, children, spouses, friends, and colleagues (Sherrod, 2018). Conflict can arise in various ways, such as when people have different ideas or opinions, values, beliefs, or expectations and cannot come to an agreement or compromise or when people are angry or upset with one another (Furlong, 2020). Conflict can be resolved, or it can lead to a resolution. If a dispute is determined, the parties involved come to a compromise on how to resolve their disagreement (Bazzi et al., 2022). A conflict can lead to additional arguments, harming a relationship if it is not resolved.

Conflict resolution is a process or procedure used to reach an agreement or compromise during a disagreement or dispute (Shahzad et al., 2020). It is a type of dispute resolution typically used in more emotional than rational differences. According to (Tabassi, Abdullah, & Bryde, 2019), conflict resolution is often the result of a conversation between two or more people in a dispute, in which each participant tries to understand the other's perspective and work out a way of solving the conflict that each person finds acceptable. Kyriazi (2018) states that conflict resolution involves resolving a conflict between two or more people, groups, organizations, or countries. This can be achieved through active communication or alternative methods such as mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution therapy.

Good communication on conflict resolution is crucial to the resolution of an argument. Conflict resolution is a slow process that takes many hours of careful work to resolve even a small argument (Bernecker, Ghassemi, & Brandstätter, 2019). Effective communication is essential to a healthy and satisfying relationship. Effective communication requires acknowledging and understanding the other person's point of view, being present and non-judgmental, being attuned to nonverbal cues, and making the other person feel understood (Ruppel et al., 2021). It also means accepting that no one is right or wrong but that each person has something to learn from the other. Ruppel et al. (2021) posit that effective communication in conflict situations eases tension, builds trust, strengthens relationships, and makes people feel at ease because they are mutually understood. At the same time, it remains firm on essential points. Effective communication is necessary for all conflict resolution activities. It can build rapport, foster understanding, and promote cooperation (Lamberti & Richards, 2019).

2.2 Communication Styles

Communication style refers to how people communicate. Communication style is the aggregate of verbal and non-verbal language, gestures, and other factors used to interact with others (Dhillon & Kaur, 2021). Communication styles are how people communicate and how they

choose to express themselves, how they choose to share information, and how they convey their thoughts and ideas (Afifi et al., 2018; Stanley & Markman, 2020; Trant et al., 2019). The communication style of one person may be different from the communication style of another person, and the communication style of one person at one time may be different from the communication style of that same person at another time.

2.2.1 Passive Communication Style

One of the most defining aspects of human communication is how a message is delivered (O'Sullivan & Carr, 2018). There are many ways to communicate, and some styles are better than others in certain situations. One of the most common styles is the passive communication style. The passive communication style is used when the communicator wants to avoid conflict or criticism (Agarwal, 2019). Relationships are built on communication. When one person shares their thoughts and feelings with another, that person can understand what the other is feeling and thinking. But in some situations, communication is not enough. Sometimes, a person needs to express themselves without being responded to.

Conflict resolution is a skill that passive communicators often succeed at, and they are highly likable people. People who communicate passively often behave indifferently and continually give way to others. They would rather listen to others speak than convey their thoughts and feelings. Because they don't express their emotions, people with this communication style frequently harbor a lot of animosities (Shrivastava, 2021). They are often misunderstood because of their lack of expressing themselves. Studies (Chen & Cole, 2022; Crews, Brouwers, & Visagie, 2019; Darics & Koller, 2019; Sallee, 2018) established a relationship between passive communication and conflict resolution. Based on the prior research, this study hypothesized that:

H_1: Passive communication has a significant positive correlation with interpersonal conflict resolution as perceived by the students

2.2.2 Aggressive Communication Style

The aggressive communication style is one of the most straightforward. It consists of clear, concise statements that get right to the point. This style is very effective in situations with a lot of information. An aggressive communication style would be designed to bring that specific message to the world. Aggressive communication allows people to express their opinions, needs, and thoughts while simultaneously ensuring they listen to the other person to build a

relationship. An aggressive style is a powerful tool that can be used effectively. It's a way of communicating that is deliberately clear, concise, and to the point. It's a way of making decisions that don't take well to dilly-dealing, equivocation, and indecision. People with aggressive communication styles tend to have strong opinions. Even if it offends someone else, they have no problem speaking what is on their mind. They tend to be noisy, demanding, and quick to place responsibility for their errors on others. Aggressive communication works perfectly in strengthening the relationship. Previous research like Aureli, Cords, and Van Schaik (2002), Smith et al. (2002), Akgun and Araz (2014), and Anderson and Banerjee (2010) established a relationship between aggressive communication and conflict resolution. Thus, this study hypothesized that:

H_2: Aggressive communication has a significant positive correlation with interpersonal conflict resolution as perceived by the students

2.2.3 Passive-Aggressive Communication Style

Some people are better at communicating their feelings and needs and have recognized certain good and bad communication styles. One such style is called the passive-aggressive communication style. The way we communicate can make or break a relationship. It can make you seem like a loving and caring partner or distant and uncaring. It can also profoundly affect the other person in the relationship, who may feel like you don't care about them or like they're not important enough to speak to (Maloney & Moore, 2020). Communicators who are passive-aggressive straddle the line between passivity and aggression. Though not passive communicators, they often prefer to keep their ideas and feelings to themselves (Ogunyemi & Olagbaju, 2020). They will murmur under their breath or use subliminal, indirect communication techniques rather than express their feelings directly.

Some of the most common characteristics of a passive-aggressive person are uncertainty and a lack of clear direction. They are often indecisive and will avoid making decisions. They also tend to blame others for their mistakes and failures. They prefer to complain and blame others rather than take responsibility for their actions or words. Understanding other people's communication styles can be difficult. Some people are quiet and reserved, while others are gregarious and outgoing. Some people are direct and to the point, while others tend to ramble and speak vaguely. How people communicate often indicates their personality and an important part of the relationship. However, when communication is not effective, it can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including poor relationships, conflict,

and misunderstanding (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005). Researchers from different fields examine the relationship between passive-aggressive communication and conflict resolution (Biçer, 2020; Lim & Yazdanifard, 2012; Liu & Roloff, 2015). However, based on the empirical evidence, this study hypothesized that:

H_3: Passive-Aggressive communication has a significant positive correlation with interpersonal conflict resolution as perceived by the students

2.2.4 Assertive Communication Style

The most effective communicators are those with an assertive communication style who frequently employ 'I' expressions (Pipas & Jaradat, 2010). Assertive communication allows people to communicate their emotions without making the other person feel inferior or unwelcome (Tripathy, 2018), express their needs, and also take into account the sentiments of others. An assertive communicator aims to find a resolution during a quarrel that seems like everyone has won.

An assertive communication style is one of the main ways people communicate in healthy ways. It can help you in various ways, including keeping things calm and relaxed in a stressful situation, explaining what you're thinking to others, and showing respect for others. The assertive communication style is characterized by using straightforward, clear, and straightforward language to get the message across without being offensive (Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 2020). It is most often associated with men, but it may also be a characteristic of women. Assertive communication style and conflict resolution have a relationship as established in the literature (Mikkelson & Sloan, 2020; Raslie, 2021; Reavey et al., 2018; Sallee, 2018). Thus, this study hypothesized that:

H_4: Assertive communication has a significant positive correlation with interpersonal conflict resolution as perceived by the students

2.2.5 Research Framework

Figure 1 shows the research framework that the study is built around. A relationship between the Independent Variables (IVs) and the Dependent Variable (DV) was examined using hypothesis testing.
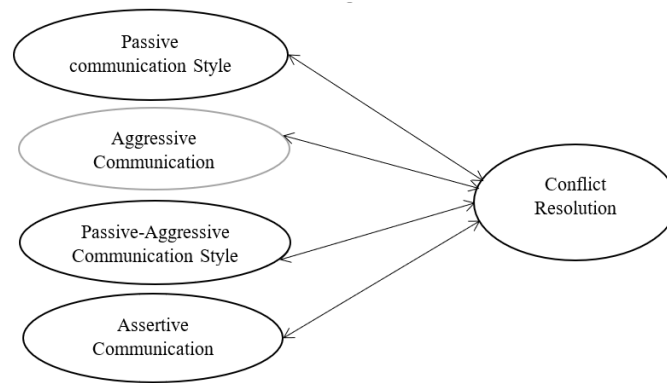
Figure 1: Research framework

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a cross-section survey of international students in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The aim was to determine the perceived correlation between communication styles and conflict resolution among the selected students. A total of 363 students were selected using simple random sampling across 15 higher institutions in the study area. The sample was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for sample size calculation. The sample size was raised by 10% to resolve sample-size errors and non-response issues as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Finally, 324 were fully completed and returned, signifying a response rate of 89.3 % for the final assessment. The data were collected using self-developed structured questionnaires based on the five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The analysis was processed using multiple regression analysis to perform Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and test the proposed hypotheses via the SPSS software Version 25.

3.1 Normality

Skewness, the grand mean, and the trimmed mean are used to determine if the data distribution is normal (Nasidi et al., 2022a; Sasaei, Pourmousa, & Mashinchi, 2022). For all the variables, a normal univariate distribution is attained if the difference between the grand mean and the trimmed mean < 0.05, the kurtosis is between ±7, and the skewness is between ±2. (Hair et al., 2010). Table 1 shows the normality test results for the explained and explanatory variables using the 5% Trimmed Mean, Skewness, and Kurtosis values.

Table 1: Normality test

Variables	Trimmed Mean	Grand Mean	Difference	Skewness	Kurtosis
PCS	3.5278	3.4928	0.0350	-.233	-.229
ACS	3.7804	3.7329	0.0475	-.556	-.241
PACS	3.4744	3.4480	0.0264	-.537	.376
AC	4.0382	3.9935	0.0447	-1.025	.536
CR	3.6772	3.6548	0.0224	-.213	-.575

3.2 Common Method Variance (CMV)

The effect of CMV was tested using Harman's single-factor analysis and the common latent factor in this study. Harman's single-factor test results, as seen in Table 2, revealed the CMV issue. Below the 50% threshold, the first component explained 26.766 percent of the variance.

Table 2: CMV assessment

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.565	26.766	26.766	8.565	26.766	26.766

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

3.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory Factor Analysis seeks to minimize the dimensionality of the data with the least amount of information lost by identifying and utilizing the structure in the correlation matrix of the variables taken into consideration in the analysis. IBM-SPSS 25.0 was used to analyze the research data for exploratory factor analysis. Kaiser Normalization and Principal Component Analysis were also employed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to evaluate the sampling efficiency in SPSS. If the value of KMO is more than 0.5, sampling is deemed sufficient. However, Pallant (2011) suggests that the value of KMO be 0.6 or higher. As a result, KMO scores more than 0.5 and Bartlett's test significance level lower than 0.05 indicate a substantial degree of correlation between the data. Table 3 demonstrates that the KMO measure determined a sufficient sample size for the factor analysis for the exploratory factor analysis of the items, which is 0.726. Bartlett's test of sphericity was likewise significant, as shown in Table 3, with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The correlation matrix is, therefore, not an identity matrix.

Table 3: KMO test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.726
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	259.694
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

The total variance explained for measuring the variables is 73.100 the total variance explained is acceptable since it exceeds 60%, as recommended by (Dehisat & Awang, 2020). Table 4 shows the details.

Table 4: Total variance explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.565	26.766	26.766	8.565	26.766	26.766	5.506	17.206	17.206
2	4.415	13.796	40.562	4.415	13.796	40.562	4.715	14.735	31.941
3	3.955	12.358	52.920	3.955	12.358	52.920	4.554	14.232	46.172
4	3.289	10.280	63.200	3.289	10.280	63.200	4.462	13.944	60.117
5	3.168	9.900	73.100	3.168	9.900	73.100	4.154	12.983	73.100

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

3.4 Correlation Matrix

Construct's correlation was calculated to determine whether Multicollinearity or Singularity among the variables is problematic. Based on the result, no singularity cases were found, as shown in Table 5, because none of the variables has a 1.0 correlation with one another (Pallant, 2011). These are commensurate with the result of Collinearity statistics, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Pearson correlations between IV and DV

		PCS	ACS	PACS	AC	CR
PCS	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	363				
ACS	Pearson Correlation	.386**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	363	363			
PACS	Pearson Correlation	.305**	.334**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	363	363	363		
AC	Pearson Correlation	.160**	.318**	.349**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.000		
	N	363	363	363	363	
CR	Pearson Correlation	.246**	.234**	.307**	.371**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	363	363	363	363	363

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.5 Reliability

According to Shkeer and Awang (2019), Cronbach's Alpha value can be used to assess internal reliability. A coefficient of reliability of less than 0.60 is weak, a coefficient of 0.70 is satisfactory, and a coefficient of reliability of more than 0.80 is excellent (Flora, 2020; Nasidi et al., 2022b). Table 6 demonstrates Cronbach's Alpha value for all the variables. The conflict resolution instrument had Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.820, which satisfies the minimum threshold. For the subscales, Passive Communication Styles had a reliability index of 0.907 and Aggressive Communication Styles had a reliability index of 0.897. Whereas, Passive - Aggressive Communication Styles had a reliability index of 0.854. On the other hand, assertive Communication Styles had Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.900. The five constructs in this study were eligible for further examination and had good reliability coefficient values.

Table 6: Reliability

Constructs	No. of Items	Alpha
Passive Communication Style (PCS)	5	.907
Aggressive Communication Style (ACS)	7	.897
Passive-Aggressive Communication Style (PACS)	7	.854
Assertive Communication Style (AC)	6	.900
Conflict Resolution (CR)	6	.820

3.6 Collinearity Statistics

Table 7 for collinearity statistics reveals no multicollinearity, as indicated by the Tolerance and VIF values. The results demonstrate that the tolerance level for passive communication is .816, aggressive communication .761, and passive-aggressive communication is .791, while the tolerance level for assertive communication is .832. The result implied no evidence of multicollinearity because the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for passive communication is 1.226, aggressive communication 1.315, passive-aggressive communication is 1.265, and assertive communication is 1.201, all within the threshold of tolerance above 0.1 and VIF values of less than 10 (Pallant, 2011).

Table 7: Collinearity test

Variables	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	**VIF**
(Constant)		
Passive Communication Style (PCS)	.816	1.226
Aggressive Communication Style (ACS)	.761	1.315
Passive-Aggressive Communication Style (PACS)	.791	1.265
Assertive Communication Style (AC)	.832	1.201

3.7 Model Summary (R^2)

The result shows that the explanatory variables accounted for 19.5% ($R^2 = 0.195$) of the variation of the explained variable. The R^2 for the model is therefore found to be positive and significant, with a P value of 0.000. The Durbin-Watson test value of 1.597 is within the range of 1.50 and 2.50, indicating the absence of autocorrelation among the variables, as shown in table 8.

Table 8: R^2 summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Durbin-Watson
1	.442[a]	.195	.186	1.597

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The hypotheses formulated for this study were tested using multiple regression analysis, as presented in Table 9. The result revealed a statistically significant relationship between passive communication style and conflict resolution. This is seen from the standardized beta value of (β = 0.139) and P-value of 0.000, which is significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Hypothesis two intends to test the effect of aggressive communication on conflict resolution. The result shows that there is a negatively insignificant relationship between aggressive communication and conflict resolution. This is indicated by the beta value of (β = 0.040) with a P-value of 0.463. As such, hypothesis 2 is not supported. The result shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between passive-aggressive communication and conflict resolution with a beta value of (β = 0.152) and a P value of 0.004. Thus, hypothesis 3 is supported. The last hypothesis tested the effect of assertive communication and conflict resolution. The result shows a positive relationship between the variables with a beta value (β = 0.283) and a P value of 0.000. Therefore, hypothesis four is supported.

Table 9: Result of multiple regression analysis

Hypotheses	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.761	.212		8.295	.000
PCS→ CR	.111	.042	.139	2.652	.008
ACS → CR	.033	.045	.040	0.734	.463
PACS → CR	.145	.051	.152	2.859	.004
AC → CR	.221	.041	.283	5.445	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Conflict Resolution

Each partner may have a distinct communication style, such as passive (Pooja, 2013), assertive (Sims, 2017), or aggressive and passive communication style (Bocar, 2017; Maloney & Moore, 2020). This paper examines the effect of communication styles on conflict resolution among partners. The paper found that an aggressive communication style exerts an insignificant effect on conflict resolution. In line with this, Guerrero, La Valley, and Farinelli (2008) assert that

aggressive people express their displeasure or hurt at things directly. Consistent with the study findings, after they have exceeded their high threshold for inappropriate behaviour, they are more likely to have explosive outbursts that are typically out of proportion to the incident that set them off.

Contrary to the study findings, partners can discuss and work out their differences by engaging in non-directive listening (Reiter & Gee, 2008; Yahya & Boag, 2014). The study further found that passive communication styles significantly influence conflict resolution. Congruently, researchers from the University of Missouri discovered that partners who use aggressive communication techniques, such as interrupting and talking over their partners, are better able to settle arguments than partners who use aggressive methods, like nodding in agreement and remaining silent. Similarly, the study found Passive - Aggressive Communication Styles as a critical determinant of Conflict Resolution among partners.

Corresponding to the study findings, Wakaba (2017) established a link between passive-aggressive and assertive styles. Instead of directly expressing aggression, the passive-aggressive couple uses ambiguity or sarcasm to convey the message. It is difficult to determine whether a word or action is meant to be intentionally harmful or not even aware that their comments are damaging or are being non-aggressively pushy. The study found a strong positive impact of assertive communication style on conflict resolution. Consistently, assertive communication aims to seek a suitable solution that protects the best interests of both parties (Adesokan, Makura, & Esere, 2021) and to debate disagreements constructively with an emphasis on understanding rather than conflict. In line with this, Chebotareva and Volk (2020) believe that effective communication is the best indicator of good relationships among partners.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study examined the perceived correlation between communication styles and conflict resolution among international students in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. According to the findings, communication styles are significant predictors of conflict resolution as perceived by international students in the study area. In particular, the study found that passive, passive-aggressive, and assertive communication styles significantly correlate with conflict resolution. However, the aggressive communication style has an insignificant correlation with conflict resolution. The students generally believe this style does not help to resolve interpersonal conflict. These outcomes suggest the students' readiness for cultivating a peaceful learning environment. This study provides relevant information that can help educational decision-makers to strengthen cross-cultural collaboration among international students in the

Malaysian context. This valuable information can also facilitate successful cooperation in academic, professional, and social settings. However, the study is limited to a cross-sectional survey of students. Thus, future research may employ a qualitative method to provide an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon.

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