



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Social Identity of Buginese-Makassarese Migrant Student

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Published online: 11 March 2025

### Abstract

The Bugis-Makassar tribes are two large tribes from South Sulawesi, Indonesia, renowned for their migration tradition. Many Buginese-Makassarese young people continue this tradition by seeking better educational opportunities outside their hometown. This study aims to explore the social identity of Buginese-Makassarese migrant students in foreign cities. Using a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach and interpretive paradigm, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis, which resulted in five key themes. The findings reveal that Buginese-Makassarese migrant students feel secure in revealing their social identity, as they maintain a positive balance in their relations with both ingroups and outgroups. They display strong cohesiveness and empathy when interacting within the ingroup and exhibit self-esteem, tolerance, and effective adaptation when engaging with the outgroup. Notably, the cultural values of *siri' na pacce*—which emphasize dignity, empathy, and mutual support—play a crucial role in shaping their social identity and promoting psychological well-being. These values contribute significantly to the student's self-concept and their ability to navigate complex social interactions in a new environment. This study provides valuable insights into how migrant students, particularly from the Buginese-Makassarese ethnic group, can adjust and maintain their cultural values while adapting to life in different cities.

**Keywords:** Bugis, Makassar, migrant student, social identity

### INTRODUCTION

Migrating is an activity that students often do as a step to pursue higher education outside their hometown, opening up new opportunities for better personal development. This process involves academic aspects and relates to social, cultural, and psychological adjustments. However, migrant students face major challenges that hinder their education and social mobility, including cultural barriers, family-related difficulties, material hardships, educational disruptions, and undocumented legal status (Free et al., 2014).

They often struggle to adapt to a new multicultural environment, influenced by various external and internal factors. Some of the barriers influenced by external factors are related to differences in the educational environment (Pownall et al., 2023), language (Mui et al., 2022), learning style (Saiful, 2013), and the transition from living with family to independent living (Evans et al., 2022). Migrant

students also face culture shock and difficulties adjusting to social norms and practices (Lewis, 2023).

Internal conflicts among students are also an important highlight in the migration process. Common psychological problems experienced are related to cognitive dissonance and identity crisis (Zhiyi, 2024). Cognitive dissonance can occur due to a mismatch between understanding related to learning methods and cultural backgrounds rooted in new experiences (Jain, 2019). Meanwhile, research by Brance et al. (2024) showed that migrant students, especially those from the first generation, often experience a sense of disconnection from their previous identity while integrating with the new environment and culture. Feelings of loneliness and homesickness are also common problems for migrant students as they feel isolated away from their families and hometowns (Ahrari et al., 2019).

To understand the resolution of external and internal conflicts in migrant students, examining how their social identity plays a role in their adaptation process is necessary. As conceptualized by Tajfel & Turner (1979), social identity is the perception of unity with a group, where individuals categorize themselves and others into groups based on shared characteristics and norms, such as ethnicity, religion, or profession. This process involves three main components: social categorization, identification, and comparison (Jenkins, 2008). Categorization is the process by which individuals automatically and continuously group themselves and others based on specific characteristics. Social identification occurs when individuals adopt a group

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identity as part of their self-concept. Meanwhile, social comparison involves evaluating one's group compared to others, which results in positive or negative evaluations and feelings toward the group.

Social identity is a crucial issue that impacts migrant students' adaptability, well-being, and academic success in their new sociocultural environment. This process is essential for students' personal development and creating social harmony in a plural society. The research results of Tran & Gomes (2017) showed that the connectedness or disconnection experienced by migrant students significantly impacts their well-being and academic performance. When migrant students can manage their social identities - both by maintaining the values of their home culture and by adapting to the culture they are studying - they tend to be more successful in navigating the academic challenges they face (Preusche & Göbel, 2022). Thus, a good social identity management process is instrumental in influencing the success of migrating students, including those from the Bugis and Makassar tribes known for their migrating traditions (Fatmawati & Kurnia, 2023).

The Bugis and Makassar are two major ethnic groups from South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The phenomenon of migration has been a fundamental aspect of their cultural identity for centuries. For the Buginese-Makassarese people, migrating is not just a process of moving. It manifests courage, hard work, and a spirit of adventure. It is also an attempt to improve their quality of life, both economically and socially (Happe et al., 2021). Some Buginese-Makassarese youth also perpetuate this ancestral tradition, migrating for better educational opportunities outside their hometowns. While migrant students are already required to face the challenges of migration life, Buginese-Makassarese migrant students also face other demands for success from their families and communities back home.

Through a qualitative approach, this research explores the meaning of the social identity of Buginese-Makassarese migrants in different cities. This research is unique in exploring the social identity of Buginese-Makassarese migrants, which has not been widely discussed in the context of higher education migration. This is in contrast to previous research conducted by Sholichah (2016), who highlighted the dilemmas related to social identity faced by Madurese ethnic migrants in adapting to a new cultural environment. Other research related to social identity was also conducted by Sulistiani (2021), who highlighted the critical role of Gayo ethnic student organizations in facilitating communication and cultural exchange.

Similarly, some Indonesian Tionghoa students experience cultural identity uncertainty due to a lack of full recognition from both the Indonesian and Chinese governments, highlighting the need for Indonesia to strengthen unity in diversity (Christian, 2017). This research is expected to help understand strategic efforts that can reduce the adaptation of migrant students to develop cognitive, affective, and good communication skills between migrant students and the local community (Gong et al., 2021).

Based on the background that has been explained, this study can provide a deeper understanding of how Buginese-Makassarese migrant students interpret and manage their social identity in the different city, contributing to their psychological well-being and academic success. Meanwhile, for educational institutions, the findings of this study can help create an inclusive and supportive learning environment and design responsive programs according to the needs of students from various cultural backgrounds

## METHOD

### Approach and Design

The research design used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. This phenomenological approach seeks to understand a person's experience of consciousness from a first-person perspective (Smith, 2018). Meanwhile, the paradigm used is interpretive because it aims to explore the understanding of how Buginese-Makassarese migrating students interpret their social identity in the different cities.

### Participant's Profiles and Selection Procedure

The participants in this study were three Buginese-Makassarese migrants studying at Universitas X (pseudonym) in Malang City. The Universitas X, located in Malang City, East Java, is a state university with multicultural students. This can be seen from the implementation of the Kampung Budaya (Cultural Kampong) program, which is routinely organized by the Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa (Student Executive Board) of Universitas X and aims to preserve and promote the wealth of local culture from various regions in Indonesia, as well as provide a space for students to introduce cultural identity to the broader community (Prasetya Online, 2019). In 2023, Universitas X also recorded that most new students who enrolled came from outside Malang City and Malang Regency (Radar Malang, 2023). This diversity can provide a broader picture of how Buginese-Makassarese migrants interact and adjust to the new environment.

The first participant, Oki (pseudonym), is female and twenty-three years old. Based on her background, Oki's grandfather is of Bugis descent, but Oki's parents and Oki spent her childhood in Makassar City. The second participant, Viki (pseudonym), is twenty years old and male. Viki's mother is from Bandung but his father is a native of Makassar. Viki and their parents have lived in Makassar for a long time because his mother no longer has relatives in her hometown. The third participant, Diki (pseudonym), is male, twenty-three years old, and also of Buginese-Makassarese descent.

Participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. This approach allowed the researchers to focus on individuals whose experiences are most relevant, ensuring that the data collected is rich and detailed, also enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings (Douglas, 2022). In this study, the criteria for participant selection included being of Bugis-Makassar ethnicity and being required to have completed at least one semester of study at Universitas X. This semester-long experience was deemed necessary, as it provided participants with sufficient opportunity to interact with other students on campus.

### Data Collection and Storage Procedures

The interviews were conducted in-depth using a semi-structured approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of the social identity of Buginese-Makassarese migrant students in their new environment. This interview method enables participants to express their experiences in their own words, yielding rich and detailed data that is essential for phenomenological analysis (Henriksen et al., 2022). Given this study's specific focus, deep exploration of each participant's narrative is prioritized over a large sample size. Following (Morse, 2000), a narrower topic with in-depth data collection requires fewer participants to

achieve saturation. With three participants, the study ensures comprehensive insights while maintaining analytical depth without redundancy (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2015).

Data were collected through face-to-face online interviews. Each participant was interviewed only once, with each interview session lasting approximately one hour. This ensures that the information obtained from each individual was gathered in a single, in-depth opportunity, providing a comprehensive view of their perspectives. The researcher prepared an interview question guide beforehand, but additional questions could arise during the interview process as needed. The concept of data saturation in this research is evaluated by particular criteria, which encompass the thoroughness of the data, the repetitiveness of themes, and the lack of new information arising from the interviews conducted (Yang et al., 2022).

Data collected for this study, including audio recordings, online meeting recordings, interview transcripts, informed consent, and other related documents, were stored confidentially to ensure that participants' data was private. All data formats were digital and stored in a secure cloud-based service, which can only be accessed by authorized researchers through the private link.

### Data Analysis and Validation Techniques

Following the interviews, recordings from each participant were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and capture every word spoken. The data analysis from the verbatim was done using thematic analysis, which was conducted using a six-step process: familiarisation data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data validation was done using researcher triangulation. This triangulation method seeks to strengthen the research process, expand understanding by adding depth and breadth, and compensate for the inherent limitations of relying on a single research method (Santos et al., 2020).

### Ethical Consideration and Potential Bias

Participants were given the opportunity to review the informed consent before the interview began and sign it if they agreed to participate. The informed consent outlined the potential benefits and consequences of participating in the study. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, with no financial compensation provided.

This study's potential source of bias stems from data interpretation, given that the first and third author shares Buginese-Makassarese ethnicity with the participants. To mitigate this, the second author, who is from another ethnicity, provided an alternative perspective during data analysis. Furthermore, the researchers consulted with other experienced qualitative researchers to gain feedback and ensure the credibility of the study's findings.

## RESULT

This research aims to determine how Buginese-Makassarese migrants interpret their social identity in different cities. The results of the interviews show that Buginese-Makassarese migrants maintain cultural values as their social identity. These values were identified into five themes: *siri' na pacce* as a concept of self-worth and empathy, self-adjustment, intercultural harmony,

maintaining solidarity, and introducing Buginese-Makassarese culture.

### Theme 1: *Siri' Na Pacce* as a Concept of Self-worth and Empathy

This theme addresses how Buginese-Makassarese migrants in Malang apply the principles of *siri'* (self-worth) and *pacce* (empathy) as they navigate the complexities of migration. The interviews reveal that these values shape how they view themselves and interact with others, reinforcing their social identity in the diaspora. The participants see these values as essential in maintaining dignity and forming relationships in a new environment.

The concept of *siri'* is fundamental to understanding how Buginese-Makassarese migrants preserve their self-worth in a new and often unfamiliar environment. For many participants, *siri'* is not just a cultural ideal but a practical approach to interacting with the world, especially in a place where they are a minority group. It influences how they present themselves and react to how others perceive them. Interestingly, although some ethnic groups view them as "loud" or "strong," these traits are embraced rather than viewed as negative. It reinforces the idea that their identity is rooted in resilience and strength, which can be empowering. For example, Oki (female, 23 years old) stated, *"I just laughed. No, I don't feel offended. Because if people see it negatively, I think it's an advantage. Because it's like people are more reluctant towards us Makassarese"*. This quote shows how *siri'* manifests in everyday interactions. Oki's lack of offence suggests that Buginese-Makassarese individuals have a strong sense of self-worth that allows them to transcend potentially negative judgments about their culture. Instead of internalizing these perceptions, they interpret them as a sign of respect, further reinforcing their dignity.

Similarly, the custom of *uang panai'*, the dowry practice in Buginese-Makassarese culture, is another way they maintain *siri'*. The practice is often misunderstood by outsiders but is seen as an expression of the family's honour. Oki's acceptance of this view demonstrates how the custom is integrated into her sense of self-worth, *"If my friend asked me, [Where are you from?], I said, Makassar. And then say, [So, you are Buginese?]. You can say directly that they will disclaim me, [You must have expensive uang panai']. I think that's good. Because it's already like that. Then, what do you want, that's the custom"* (Oki, female, 23 years old). It highlights how *siri'* is not just a personal value but also a collective one, perpetuated by cultural practices that give meaning and stability to their identities.

*Pacce*, or empathy, is a key component of Buginese-Makassarese identity, enabling them to build strong, supportive relationships in the diaspora. The interviews reveal that *pacce* goes beyond mere friendliness; it involves a deep sense of solidarity and care for the well-being of others, particularly within their migrant community. This value is evident in how they support one another, whether by visiting sick friends, attending community events, or offering academic help. Diki (male, 23 years old) expressed this sentiment, *"Yes, who knows if someone is sick or hospitalized. Well, that directly raises my desire to visit them. It can be linked to positive emotion. And every time they schedule activities, as much as possible, I will attend it."* This strong sense of solidarity shows that *pacce* is not merely about social gatherings but is about creating a support system where no one is left behind. The community fosters an environment where people are encouraged to help each other without expecting anything in return. It is also reflected in academic settings, where seniors often help

juniors navigate university life and social integration. The value of *pacce* also manifests in the emotional bonds formed among migrants. The interviewees expressed deep sadness when seniors graduated and left the city, marking the end of an era and the beginning of a new chapter where they would take on the role of supporters for the next generation of students.

## Theme 2: Self-adjustment

This theme focuses on how Buginese-Makassarese migrants adapt to new cultural and environmental contexts. Their challenges—language barriers, food differences, and climate adaptation—are seen not as insurmountable obstacles but as opportunities for growth and integration. The interviews suggest that successful adjustment is about overcoming these challenges and how these migrants integrate them into their evolving social identity. Language and food are two of the most immediate challenges migrants face. However, these differences become tools for adaptation and self-improvement instead of hindering their integration.

The migrants' ability to learn new languages, such as Javanese, and adapt to local culinary preferences demonstrates their flexibility and resilience in maintaining social connections. Viki (male, 20 years old) highlighted how he adapted to language differences, *"Because I live in another city. It's impossible for me to force them to follow my language. Alhamdulillah, I can adapt. I can speak the Javanese language, and it increases my language skill."* It shows how language differences are not a hindrance but an opportunity for personal growth. Migrants are willing to learn the local language to fit in better and enrich their cultural understanding.

Food preferences were also adjusted to some extent. Diki (male, 23 years old) mentioned avoiding spicy foods that did not align with his tastes, whereas Viki was more flexible in adapting to local food, *"I can choose food even though I prefer the typical food of my hometown."* It demonstrates a more pragmatic approach to food differences—migrants do not need to abandon their cultural foods completely but adjust based on availability and preferences.

Adapting to a new environment, especially regarding the weather, was also part of the self-adjustment process. Viki (male, 20 years old) noted that he found himself more comfortable in Malang's cooler climate, demonstrating how environmental factors can also shape a migrant's attachment to a new city, *"I prefer life in a different town, which was marked by my ability to memorize the road routes in this town more than in my hometown."* It illustrates how adaptation extends beyond food and language to the physical environment. It shows that migrants can develop a sense of belonging even in a city with different weather and conditions.

## Theme 3: Intercultural Harmony

The study reveals how Buginese-Makassarese migrants in Malang often build relationships with people from different ethnic backgrounds through shared academic experiences, extracurricular activities, and community projects. Despite initial cultural differences, these students find common ground through joint efforts, especially those related to academic or committee work. Viki (20 years old) mentioned that although he initially wanted to make friends with people from Java, he realized he should not forget his fellow Makassar friends who are also studying in Malang. He said, *"Since we are all away from home, we should support*

*each other."* It highlights that, even with different backgrounds, there is a strong desire to maintain connections with fellow migrants and offer mutual support in a foreign city. Diki (23 years old) also shared an emotional moment when he accompanied his friends to the terminal after graduation. His friend said to him, *"Diki, you are sincere. I couldn't cry when we parted, but I felt really sad about leaving."* Diki reflected on this as the most emotional part of his experience. His story shows how relationships formed through shared experiences develop into deeper connections beyond mere social interactions, mainly when empathy and sincerity are present.

Intercultural harmony among Buginese-Makassarese migrants and other ethnic groups goes beyond superficial interactions; it requires a deeper understanding of the challenges that arise from cultural differences. Diki (23 years old) reflected on when he accompanied friends from other ethnic backgrounds and expressed how they appreciated his sincerity. *"That's probably how they (other ethnic students) perceive Makassar people,"* he said. It shows how even when cultural misunderstandings or language barriers exist, the willingness to engage with empathy and open-mindedness helps smooth interactions and fosters stronger relationships between ethnic groups. Empathy is a crucial aspect of intercultural harmony, and it allows migrants to connect with others based on shared emotional and social challenges. Viki (20 years old) emphasized the importance of mutual support among fellow Makassar migrants, saying, *"If not us, then who else will help each other in Malang?"* This statement reflects the shared struggles of being away from home, creating a common ground for empathy and solidarity. Viki's perspective demonstrates that the ability to empathize with others' experiences helps migrants foster a supportive, inclusive environment and strengthens social bonds across different cultural backgrounds.

Through their involvement in diverse cultural exchanges, Buginese-Makassarese migrants experience a process of identity negotiation. They are no longer just representatives of their ethnic group; they evolve to become part of a larger, more complex social fabric. Diki (23 years old) shared his experience from high school in Makassar, where seniors would often come to socialize with his class. He explained, *"When I was in high school in Makassar, many senior students came to socialize in our class."* The experience illustrates how Buginese-Makassarese migrants, while proud of their cultural heritage, continuously reshape their identity through their interactions with other cultures. Their identity is no longer fixed but evolves as they engage with the multicultural society around them, blending traditional values with those learned through new experiences.

## Theme 4: Maintaining Solidarity

Seniors in the Buginese-Makassarese migrant community play a key role in fostering solidarity by guiding new migrants through migration challenges. Oki (23 years old) explained, *"That is because there are only a few female students in each batch—not as many as the male students. So, whenever there was a female student, and I happened to be the oldest in Malang then, they would contact me."* It shows how seniors proactively provide emotional and practical support, especially when newcomers are far from home. Seniors' outreach provides practical advice and emotional care, helping newcomers feel secure and connected. Diki (23 years old) shared, *"Maybe that is what the senior students often did for me when I was a freshman—like picking me up and taking me places. That's also what I*

*still apply now.*" It highlights how seniors' support ensures a smoother transition for new migrants.

As new migrants settle in, they pass on the same support to juniors, creating a cycle of solidarity. Oki (23 years old) reflected, *"If my mother suddenly calls me at night asking, [Where are you? Don't come home too late], something like that. But, because my mom happens to be very close to my friends, so whenever I tell her I'm with my friends, she completely trusts me."* It demonstrates how the care received from seniors is reciprocated as new migrants support those who follow.

Solidarity goes beyond practical help; it offers emotional and psychological support, helping migrants cope with isolation. Viki (20 years old) mentioned, *"At first after I received the announcement that I had passed the university entrance exam. My older sibling immediately informed me that they have a friend at Universitas X. So, my sibling's friend often gives me recommendations (about student life)."* It illustrates the emotional benefit of a support system that makes migrants feel less isolated. The emotional bonds strengthen the migrants' sense of belonging and responsibility to contribute to the community.

The departure of seniors, however, marks a transition as new migrants take responsibility for maintaining the community. Solidarity also helps migrants face external challenges like discrimination. By standing together, Buginese-Makassarese migrants resist negative stereotypes and maintain their cultural identity. The strength of their solidarity provides a buffer against external pressures, allowing them to thrive despite challenges.

#### Theme 5: Introducing Buginese-Makassarese Culture

Buginese-Makassarese migrants introduce their culture through organized events like the annual *Kampung Budaya* (Cultural Kampong), where they showcase their customs and traditions. Viki (20 years old) shared, *"They are curious, for example, they ask, [What is this? What is this plaid box?], then I explain this erang-erang, brought when the groom comes to the bride. I also explain about uang panai, why there is uang panai in Makassar."* These cultural exchanges bridge the gap between communities and help dispel misconceptions, fostering respect and understanding.

Cultural exchange allows Buginese-Makassarese migrants to confront stereotypes and challenge preconceived notions about their culture. Viki (20 years old) further explained the significance of explaining traditions like uang panai, a cultural practice that may be misunderstood. *"Because the people outside don't use uang panai,"* he said. Addressing these misunderstandings openly creates dialogue opportunities, helping dismantle myths and promote cultural understanding. Cultural preservation is not limited to special events; it permeates daily life for Buginese-Makassarese migrants. Every interaction, whether social or academic, provides an opportunity to share and maintain cultural values. This ongoing engagement helps preserve their identity in a foreign environment, ensuring their culture remains relevant and continues to be passed on to others.

Introducing their culture helps Buginese-Makassarese migrants build intercultural relationships deeper. Teaching others about their culture fosters understanding and empathy, reducing cultural divides. This interaction helps non-Buginese-Makassarese students appreciate the customs and values of their peers, creating a more inclusive and supportive social environment for everyone.

#### DISCUSSION

Buginese-Makassarese students, as migrants, apply the value of siri' na pacce, which influences their social identity in a different city. This social identity then builds their self-concept, providing a sense of security, increasing self-confidence, and fostering a strong collaboration spirit to navigate challenges in other cities. This is in line with research conducted by Syarif et al. (2016), which states that the integration of siri' na pacce values can function as a motivational tool that positively impacts academic achievement in the learning process. This formed self-concept is realized through a diverse engagement process between the life experiences of Buginese-Makassarese migrants and their social environment.

The social classification process is the first stage in forming social identity. This process occurs with the help of their seniors who have studied in different cities. Assistance provided by seniors, such as information and recommendations to join regional forums in different cities, serves as a support network that can provide emotional and social support, helping migrant students overcome the challenges of adapting to a new culture and environment Jetten et al. (2014). With the information and recommendations provided, Buginese-Makassarese migrating students can categorize themselves as part of a larger group, namely a group of migrating students from the same area. Individuals group themselves and others into certain social categories to understand their social environment. In this study, it was found that similarities in language and interaction models within ethnic groups helped them to adapt to new places even though participants experienced many challenges. This helps them become more adaptable, in line with the research of Jetten et al. (2014), which shows that recognition of relevant social groups can help individuals feel more comfortable and accepted in a new environment.

A person identifies himself as part of a group according to the distinctiveness model. Individuals avoid personal or inclusive self-interpretations and instead define themselves in terms of distinctive category classifications because individuals have similarities in the group (Brewer, 1991). Social identity and group loyalty are hypothesized to be the strongest for self-categorization that simultaneously provides a sense of belonging and a sense of distinctiveness. Depersonalization and group size interact as determinants of the strength of social identification. Identification in a group can increase individual self-esteem because participants reported being able to be more open with pride in their origin and ethnicity. Identification with the same ethnic group helps reduce feelings of loneliness and provides social support. Individuals also reported that in situations of threat or uncertainty such as being in the final semester when their friends have separated, individuals are more likely to seek out groups that can provide the protection and stability of identity that is obtained in the same ethnic group.

After the categorization process, migrant students identify as part of a group, which creates an emotional attachment to their group and strengthens their sense of "us" as distinct from "them." This identification plays a crucial role in understanding how groups interact and influence each other in the context of social identity complexity (Knifsend & Juvonen, 2014). Once students identify themselves as part of a group, they can increase empathy toward others because of emotions that are understood or felt more strongly within their specific social or cultural group. These emotions, shaped by collective experiences, cultural norms, and shared history, are known

as collective emotions (Turner, 2007). For instance, feelings of pride or collective shame are only fully understood by members of a particular group.

The cultural value of *pacce* held by Buginese-Makassarese migrant students serves as a symbol of empathy, motivating them to feel the suffering of others, which in turn drives prosocial actions. Research by (Stürmer & Siem, 2017) supports this by demonstrating that strong group identification can increase empathy and promote group assistance. For these students, their social identification as Buginese-Makassarese helps form strong group cohesion in a new environment, offering emotional support and continuity. This group connection is vital for maintaining both mental health and academic performance among migrant students (Jetten et al., 2014).

Another effort made by Buginese-Makassarese migrants in this process is to introduce their culture through active participation in *Kampung Budaya* (Cultural Kampung) events. This participation reflects their need to identify with the Buginese-Makassarese group and strengthen their emotional attachment to their culture. They introduce their traditions and customs through these activities, strengthening their sense of community and group cohesion. The results of a study by Ng et al. (2018) found that engaging in group activities involving students from different cultures can increase the sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation, strengthening students' social identity and integration in the migrant environment. Cultural activities participated by these migrant students can strengthen harmony between cultures. Not only do they get to know and introduce their own culture, but individuals are able to recognize other cultures that are different from their own. In this case, these students can identify their ingroup and outgroup cultures.

The following process is social comparison, in which Buginese-Makassarese migrants compare their group to other groups, which consistently results in positive evaluations and feelings towards the ingroup and outgroup. Migrant Buginese-Makassarese students show ingroup favoritism towards their own group, where they positively compare themselves with the outgroup and perceive existing stereotypes as attributes that strengthen their self-esteem. The cultural value of *siri'* (self-esteem), which is highly valued by Buginese-Makassarese society, plays a vital role in this favorable social comparison. The concept of *siri'* encourages Buginese-Makassarese migrants to maintain their personal and group honor, so they view stereotypes as something that can strengthen their group identity rather than undermine it. They also do not simply accept these existing views but consider them symbols of cultural strength that can bring respect from other groups. By following this *siri'* values, students develop a strong sense of self-confidence and are resilient to adverse external influences, thus increasing their self-esteem (Achmadan et al., 2018).

As for outgroups, Buginese-Makassarese migrant students also show positive views and strong tolerance by adapting to and respecting cultural differences in the different cities. This attitude is key to building harmonious relationships with the local community. They can adjust to local customs and establish good relationships with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, reflecting the flexibility of their social identity. This result supports the research of Syamsidar & Hum (2013), who found that Buginese-Makassarese migrants can interact harmoniously with various ethnic groups. This ability characterizes their migration history and can foster a sense of community without conspicuous conflict. Adjustments to language, food, and environmental conditions also show that

Buginese-Makassarese migrants can adapt and overcome differences constructively without reducing their pride in their cultural identity. This finding aligns with research highlighting the importance of cultural adaptation and social interaction in maintaining ethnic identity in different cities (Theodorus, 2021).

Overall, the concept of *siri' na pacce* plays an essential role in the social identity formation process of Buginese-Makassarese migrants. The value of *siri'* represents personal dignity and honor, while the value of *pacce* indicates empathy and solidarity. Both values guide the formation of a positive self-concept for Buginese-Makassarese migrant students regarding how they view themselves and interact with others.

## Limitations

This study has limitations on geographical coverage, as it only covers the Buginese-Makassarese migrating student community in Malang City. Thus, the results do not fully reflect the experiences of Buginese-Makassarese migrants as minorities in other regions. Future research is expected to explore the social identity of Buginese-Makassarese migrants in a broader and more diverse geographical scope to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the formation of their social identity in various social and cultural contexts. Another limitation is that the interviews were conducted online, but participants were required to keep their cameras on. However, direct in-person observation was not possible, which may have limited our ability to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study contribute to social identity theory by demonstrating how Buginese-Makassarese migrant students construct their self-concept through a positive balance between ingroup and outgroup relations. Their ability to maintain cohesiveness and empathy within the ingroup while exhibiting self-esteem, tolerance, and adaptation in interactions with the outgroup highlights the crucial role of cultural values in shaping social identity. In particular, the application of *siri' na pacce*—a cultural philosophy emphasizing dignity and shared empathy—shows how inherited values continue to influence identity expression and social interactions in new environments.

In terms of educational practice, this study underscores the importance of fostering inclusive learning environments, particularly for migrant students. Higher education institutions should actively promote multicultural awareness and socialization programs to help students from diverse backgrounds adapt more effectively. By integrating discussions on cultural diversity into student orientation programs, campus activities, and academic curricula, universities can encourage mutual respect, cultural sensitivity, and social harmony. This approach can enhance students' ability to navigate intercultural interactions and create a more cohesive campus community.

## DECLARATION

### Ethics approval and consent to participate

Participants were asked to read the informed consent sheet before the interview began and were asked to sign if they agreed to continue participation. The informed consent sheet contained information regarding the risks and benefits that participants may experience during the study. Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants received no material compensation.

### Consent for publication

Consent for publication was asked along with the consent to participate. They gave their consent to publish the interview results in the form of a scientific article in the journal as long as their name and identities were disguised.

### Availability of Data and Material (ADM)

Not applicable.

### Competing interests

Not applicable.

### Funding

The authors received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

### Authors' contributions

The first author was responsible for the research conceptualization, data curation, data analysis, and writing the full article. The second author provided supervision and guidance throughout the research design and process. The third author was involved in data curation by joining the participant's interview and revising the final article.

### About the Authors

**Amalia Soraya Hasanuddin** has completed an undergraduate degree in psychology at Universitas Brawijaya. She is currently in her second year as a graduate student in psychological science at Universitas Surabaya. More recently, she has begun investigating organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior among employees, along with social identity among migrant students.

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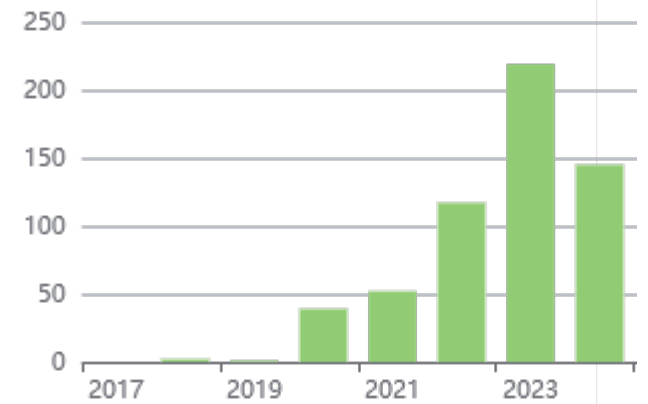
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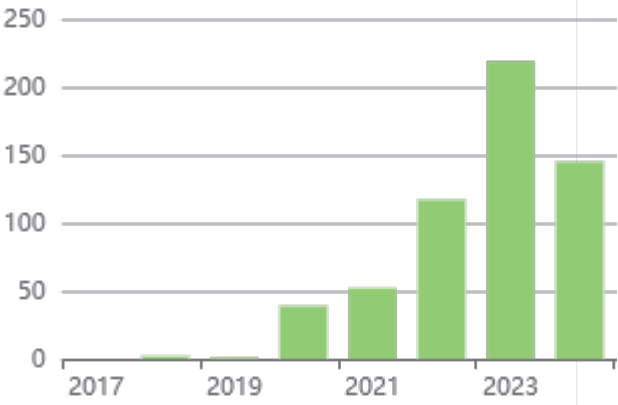
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