

### **Social Presence And Academic Interaction In Online English Learning: Perspectives Of Teachers And Students In Two Public University Contexts**

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#### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the influence of social presence on online learning in Indonesian bachelor's degree programs. The objective is to identify effective strategies for enhancing students' online learning experiences by promoting social presence. Data was collected through 20 semi-structured interviews and 269 online surveys, analyzing qualitative and quantitative information. The findings highlight a significant positive relationship between social presence, engagement, happiness, and academic success in online courses. Notably, increasing one unit of social presence leads to a remarkable 10.28-point improvement in academic achievement. These results emphasize the importance of prioritizing interaction, collaboration, and community building in the online learning environment. Policymakers and educators can utilize these insights to design effective online courses tailored to bachelor's degree students' unique needs. By incorporating strategies that foster social presence and create a sense of belonging, educators can enhance students' engagement, satisfaction, and overall learning experiences. Therefore, this research underscores the significance of social presence in online learning and provides valuable insights to improve students' academic achievements and online learning experiences.*

**Keywords:** *Social Presence, Online Learning, Engagement, Academic Performance, Indonesian Universities*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Global education delivery has undergone a substantial change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including in Indonesia. The sudden implementation of Work From Home (WFH) and Study From Home (SFH) policies has resulted in educational institutions rapidly transitioning to online learning. However, the shift to online learning has brought about considerable challenges, particularly regarding social presence, which refers to how individuals perceive each other as real persons in an online learning environment (Elliott, 2019; Hew, Huang, Du, & Jia, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). This study aims to analyze the perspectives of teachers and students in Indonesia on social presence in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social presence is crucial in online learning, particularly when physical engagement is limited or non-existent (Blaschke, 2018). The lack of physical presence in online learning environments challenges students and teachers to feel connected to each other, resulting in feelings of alienation, disengagement, and decreased motivation. Therefore, establishing a social presence in online learning is essential to foster community and promote a positive

learning experience. Previous research on social presence in online learning has highlighted its complexity, involving various factors such as communication, engagement, and collaboration (Natarajan & Joseph, 2022; Xu, Li, & Luo, 2021). Several strategies have been identified to enhance social presence in online learning environments, including facilitating student interaction and cooperation, promoting group cohesion and identification, providing timely feedback and support, and utilizing multimedia technologies to enhance learner engagement (Aldosari, Alramthi, & Eid, 2022; Chen, Sun, & Wang, 2022).

However, in the Indonesian context, additional sociocultural aspects must be considered while building contact among students in virtual classrooms. For example, collectivism and respect for authoritative people are widespread cultural characteristics that may affect social presence differently from other contexts (Alfian, Rozal, Berliana, & Noprival, 2023). Additionally, the power-distance culture in Indonesia entails a higher level of acceptance of the unequal distribution of power in society, which might alter how students and teachers engage in online learning environments (Yoon & Leem, 2021). Therefore, further research is necessary to understand how social presence can be effectively established in the Indonesian setting to ensure the efficacy of online learning. By acknowledging the specific sociocultural elements in the Indonesian environment, educators can develop successful approaches to foster social presence and enhance students' online learning experiences. It is particularly significant given the increasing popularity of online learning in Indonesia and its potential to expand educational access for students in rural areas or facing challenges with traditional forms of education.

In Indonesia, online learning has been implemented for several years due to geographical limitations and high student enrolment rates (De Vega & Nur, 2022). However, the COVID-19 epidemic has expedited the use of online learning nationwide, stressing the need for social presence. Moreover, the Indonesian environment presents distinct socio-cultural elements that may affect social presence differently from other contexts. These elements include collectivism, respect for authority figures, and a power-distance culture (Nurtjahyati & Sukisno, 2021), determining how students and teachers engage in online learning environments. Therefore, there is a need to examine how social presence may be generated effectively in the Indonesian setting to ensure the success of online learning.

Despite the importance of social presence in online learning, there is a vacuum in our knowledge regarding how it might be effectively established in the Indonesian setting. Most studies on social presence tend to highlight elements contributing to social presence but focus less on studying how it might be established effectively in online learning (Aldosari et al., 2022; Messmer & Berkling, 2021; Yoon & Leem, 2021). Consequently, this study addresses this gap by investigating teachers' and students' perspectives on social presence in online learning at an Indonesian public university.

The outcomes of this study can have a significant impact on online education in Indonesia and globally. Educators can foster a sense of community and enhance students' online learning experience by identifying effective strategies to develop a social presence in online learning environments. It is particularly important considering the increasing adoption of online education in Indonesia and its potential to expand educational access for students facing geographic or other barriers. The results can also contribute to developing culturally appropriate strategies for enhancing social presence in online learning by considering the specific socio-cultural aspects of the Indonesian context. Ultimately, this research aims to improve online education for students in Indonesia and worldwide while contributing to the broader conversation on the topic.

### **Social Presence in Online Learning**

Researchers, teachers, and practitioners are increasingly interested in studying social presence in online learning. Due to the enormous growth of online learning platforms and courses over the past ten years, there has been an increase in interest in learning how social

presence might be developed in these settings. Marmon (2018) defines social presence as the extent students feel they belong to an online community and can build meaningful connections with others there. It is essential to foster collaborative learning, community building, and learner engagement. Online learning, where there is little to no in-person interaction between instructors and students, places a premium on social presence.

According to research, social presence is positively correlated with student satisfaction, engagement, and learning outcomes. Extreme social engagement can raise students' motivation, engagement, and social support. A pleasant learning atmosphere where students are encouraged to cooperate, share their experiences, and give one another feedback can also be fostered by social presence. There are several methods for fostering social presence in online learning settings. These include fostering a positive instructor presence, fostering opportunities for student interaction and collaboration, encouraging group cohesion and identity, offering prompt feedback and support, utilizing multimedia tools to increase learner engagement, and providing timely feedback and support (Miao & Ma, 2022; Weidlich & Bastiaens, 2019).

These tactics may be ineffective depending on the cultural and technological environment (Maru, Nur, & Lengkoan, 2020; Nur, Anas, & Rahayu, 2022). For instance, collectivism and deference to authority are dominant cultural values in the Indonesian context that may impact how social presence is developed in online learning. In order to design and implement strategies for fostering social presence in online learning, socio-cultural aspects must be considered (Massaro, Barnhart, Lasky, & Jeremiah, 2021).

Additionally, several technological aspects, like the layout of the online platform, the accessibility of communication tools, and the speed and dependability of internet connectivity, can impact social presence. Technology hurdles can prevent students from developing a social presence, emphasizing the significance of creating user-friendly, open, and dependable online learning systems. An important component of online learning that can affect student experiences and outcomes is social presence. Cultural, technological, and learner-specific needs and preferences should be considered when developing techniques for fostering social presence. Additional study is required to examine the function of social presence in various circumstances and to pinpoint efficient methods for fostering social presence in online learning.

### **Online Learning in Indonesia**

Due to certain considerations, including regional constraints and a high student enrollment rate, online learning has recently gained popularity in Indonesia (Giatman, Siswati, & Basri, 2020; Wijaya, Zhou, Purnama, & Hermita, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has hastened the implementation of online education across the nation as it has become essential to maintain academic continuity while guaranteeing the safety of students, teachers, and staff. The importance of social contact in online learning has also been brought to light by the epidemic. Learners can engage with their classmates, instructors, and course material by being present in society. It can improve learning outcomes, engagement, and motivation. Social presence can be especially crucial in creating a sense of community and shared identity among learners in the Indonesian environment, where collectivism is a major cultural value (Yulia, 2020).

Additionally, students who live in rural regions or have difficulties accessing traditional forms of education may benefit from online learning (Vega & Eppendi, 2021). Online learning can enable students in Indonesia, where there are many rural and remote villages, to acquire a top-notch education from any location with an internet connection. Additionally, online learning can be more affordable than traditional forms of education and can provide students who need to juggle work, family, and other commitments with more flexibility.

However, the Indonesian setting for online learning also has certain difficulties. Some locations have unstable internet connectivity, and not all students can access digital devices.

Most online courses are taught in English, which is not the native language of most Indonesians. Therefore, there may also be a language barrier. Online learning has been adopted for several years in Indonesia, but its accelerated adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of social presence. Online learning offers significant potential for improving access to education for students in remote areas or facing barriers to traditional forms of education, but it also presents challenges related to internet connectivity, digital device access, and language barriers.

### **Cultural Factors Affecting Social Presence**

The cultural context in which online learning occurs can significantly impact social presence. In Indonesia, collectivism and respect for authority figures are dominant cultural values that may affect how social presence is established in online learning environments. Indonesian students value social presence but approach it differently from Western students. Wijaya et al. (2020) reported that Indonesian students prefer establishing a social presence through collective activities, whereas Western students prefer individual activities. Collectivism, which emphasizes group cohesion, loyalty, and interdependence, can influence how learners interact with one another in online learning environments. Indonesian students may seek to establish a sense of community and shared identity before engaging in individual tasks. Hence, group discussions, collaborative projects, and other collective activities can effectively promote social presence among Indonesian students (Alfian, 2023).

Respect for authority figures can also impact social presence in online learning environments. Instructors are seen as competent, authoritative individuals in Indonesia who should be respected. This notion may influence how students communicate with their professors and fellow students in online learning contexts. If they believe their beliefs differ from their professors, students may be reluctant to offer questions or participate in discussions (Dirsa, Anggreni BP, Diananseri, & Setiawan, 2022; Nue & Manara, 2022).

Therefore, it is crucial to consider cultural aspects impacting social presence while developing and delivering online courses in the Indonesian context. Instructors can encourage social presence by allowing students to participate in group activities, creating clear expectations and standards, and cultivating a good instructor presence that respects cultural values. In order to better customize their teaching strategies to encourage social presence, teachers might also work to gain a greater awareness of their students' cultural backgrounds, preferences, and expectations. Collectivism and respect for authoritative figures are two socio-cultural elements that can greatly impact social presence in online learning environments. The desire for group activities among Indonesian students may necessitate a different approach than Western students' preference for solitary activities. As a result, when developing and implementing efficient ways to boost social presence in online learning, teachers must consider these cultural elements.

### **METHOD**

The current study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the relationship between social presence and learning outcomes among Bachelor's degree students taking online courses in Indonesian universities. The research questions addressed were:

- 1) How does social presence influence learning outcomes, such as engagement, satisfaction, and academic performance?
- 2) What is the correlation between social presence and learning outcomes?
- 3) What are the experiences and perspectives of Indonesian students regarding the social presence, considering sociocultural aspects?

The objectives of the study were:

- 1) To analyze the impact of social presence on learning outcomes, including engagement, satisfaction, and academic performance.
- 2) To determine the correlation between social presence and learning outcomes.
- 3) To explore and understand the experiences and perspectives of Indonesian students regarding social presence, considering sociocultural factors.

To answer these questions, quantitative data was collected through an online survey distributed to 269 participants, while qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with an additional 20 participants. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from various Indonesian universities that offer online programs. The online survey consisted of closed-ended questions covering sociodemographic characteristics, social presence, course engagement, satisfaction, and academic success. The survey was administered via email and social media platforms using Google Forms, allowing participants two weeks to respond. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using video conferencing software and focused on participants' experiences with social presence, cultural influences, and suggestions for improvement. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

Quantitative data analysis involves descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution. Correlation analysis examined the relationship between social presence and factors like engagement and satisfaction, while regression analysis explored its impact on academic performance. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify codes and themes related to social presence, cultural considerations, and recommendations for improvement. Triangulation of findings from both data sources provided a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

By addressing those research questions and objectives, the study aimed to contribute valuable insights into the role of social presence in enhancing learning outcomes for Bachelor's degree students in Indonesian universities. Additionally, it sought to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of Indonesian students, informing the design of effective online learning environments that consider sociocultural factors and promote successful educational outcomes.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The current study analyzes how social presence affects learning outcomes for Bachelor's degree students participating in online courses at Universitas Negeri Makassar and Universitas Borneo Tarakan in Indonesia. As part of this investigation, we collected socio-demographic data from 269 students (150 from Universitas Negeri Makassar and 119 from Universitas Borneo Tarakan) to understand the sample population.

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Bachelor's Degree Students

The sociodemographic features of these Bachelor's degree students are reported in Table 1 in great detail. The information in this table is critical for understanding the demographics of the sample population and how they may affect how the results are interpreted. By researching the socio-demographic characteristics of these students, we may better understand their opinions and experiences in online learning settings, which can help educators build effective online courses targeted to the needs of Bachelor's degree students.

**Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Variable	Universitas Negeri Makassar (N=150)	Universitas Borneo Tarakan (N=119)
Gender		



Variable	Universitas Negeri Makassar (N=150)	Universitas Borneo Tarakan (N=119)
Male	70 (46.7%)	55 (46.2%)
Female	80 (53.3%)	64 (53.8%)
<b>Age</b>		
≤20 years	57 (38.0%)	45 (37.8%)
21-25 years	75 (50.0%)	65 (54.6%)
>25 years	18 (12.0%)	9 (7.6%)

Table 1 displays the socio-demographic characteristics of Bachelor's degree students who participated in the study from Universitas Negeri Makassar and Universitas Borneo Tarakan. The gender distribution of the participants was practically equal between male and female students from both universities. Specifically, for Universitas Negeri Makassar, there were 70 male (46.7%) and 80 female (53.3%) students, whereas, for Universitas Borneo Tarakan, there were 55 male (46.2%) and 64 female (53.8%) students. This gender balance is crucial as it ensures that both male and female opinions are reflected in the study.

In terms of age, most Bachelor's degree students from both universities were aged between 21-25 years old, with 75 students (50.0%) from Universitas Negeri Makassar and 65 students (54.6%) from Universitas Borneo Tarakan falling within this age group. Additionally, there were 57 students (38.0%) from Universitas Negeri Makassar and 45 students (37.8%) from Universitas Borneo Tarakan who were aged ≤20 years old, whereas only a tiny number of students were beyond 25 years old. All participants held a Bachelor's degree, showing they were at a similar level in their academic path. This educational level is significant to include since it may affect the interpretation of the data, as Bachelor's degree students may have different perceptions and experiences in online learning settings compared to students with different educational levels. The sociodemographic data of the participants in the study who were pursuing a bachelor's degree are presented in detail in Table 1. The data is critical for understanding the sample composition and generalizing the findings to similar university contexts in Indonesia. These findings can assist researchers and educators in getting insights into the demographic profile of the student population and customize their treatments accordingly.

## Analysis of Social Presence, Engagement, Satisfaction, and Academic Performance

### a) Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics on social presence, engagement, happiness, and academic performance among Bachelor's degree students enrolled in online courses at two Indonesian universities, Universitas Negeri Makassar and Universitas Borneo Tarakan. In this study, bachelor's degree students taking online courses are evaluated for their social presence's effect on learning results. We gain insights into these students' perspectives and experiences in online learning environments by analyzing their social presence, engagement, happiness, and academic performance ratings. The mean scores for each variable are summarized in Table 2, allowing for a comparison between the two universities and highlighting the importance of social engagement, happiness, and social presence in promoting academic success among Bachelor's degree students taking online courses.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Social Presence, Engagement, Satisfaction, and Academic Performance Scores**

Variable	Universitas Negeri Makassar (Mean Score)	Universitas Borneo Tarakan (Mean Score)
Social Presence	3.72	3.63
Engagement	3.78	3.64
Satisfaction	3.61	3.51
Academic Performance	83.2%	81.4%

Students pursuing a Bachelor's degree at Universitas Negeri Makassar and Universitas Borneo Tarakan in Indonesia are represented in Table 2 by descriptive statistics of their social presence, engagement, happiness, and academic performance scores. Data from the two colleges can be compared, illuminating how students perceive and interact with online learning environments. On average, students from both universities scored highly on social presence, with Universitas Negeri Makassar reporting a little higher mean (3.72) than Universitas Borneo Tarakan (3.63). This study reveals how important social presence is to students' learning results in online courses at both universities. It implies that sustaining positive learning outcomes among Bachelor's degree students requires having a socially supportive online learning environment.

Students from both universities scored highly on engagement, with Universitas Negeri Makassar having a mean score somewhat higher (3.78) than Universitas Borneo Tarakan's (3.64). According to these results, participating in online learning activities and exchanges might increase motivation and enhance the learning experience for students pursuing a bachelor's degree. Students from both universities reported high average satisfaction levels, with Universitas Negeri Makassar reporting a mean score marginally higher (3.61) than Universitas Borneo Tarakan's (3.51). This study demonstrates that bachelor's degree students are quite satisfied with their online learning experiences when social presence and engagement exist. High satisfaction levels imply that students are likelier to keep taking online courses and recommend them to others.

Finally, students from both universities pursuing bachelor's degrees had good average academic performance scores. The mean score for Universitas Negeri Makassar was slightly higher (83.2%) than that for Universitas Borneo Tarakan (81.4%). These findings suggest that social presence, engagement, and happiness among Bachelor's degree students enrolled in online courses are essential for improving academic success. This study emphasizes the value of a safe learning environment that fosters interpersonal connection and student engagement. Concerning the views and experiences of Bachelor's degree students in online learning settings at two Indonesian universities, Table 2 provides critical insights. According to the statistics, their social presence, involvement, and contentment improve these pupils' academic performance. This knowledge can be used by educators to create efficient online curricula that meet the unique demands of Bachelor's degree students and advance learning outcomes.

## b) Correlation Analysis of Social Presence and Learning Outcomes in Online Courses

As they navigate virtual classrooms in online learning environments, students may encounter isolation and disengagement problems. The degree to which students in an online course feel connected to their classmates and professors is a subject that instructors have been researching solutions. Previous studies have demonstrated that a social presence positively correlates with various learning outcomes, such as student engagement, satisfaction, and academic success. In this context, Table 3 demonstrates the correlation coefficients between

Social Presence and four learning outcomes: Engagement, Satisfaction, and Academic Performance. The table gives significant insights into the correlations between these variables, which can inform instructors' tactics to boost Social Presence and improve students' learning experiences in online courses.

**Table 3. Correlation between Social Presence and Learning Outcomes**

Correlation	Social Presence	Engagement	Satisfaction	Academic Performance
<b>Social Presence</b>	1.00	0.68**	0.56**	0.43**
<b>Engagement</b>	0.68**	1.00	0.63**	0.52**
<b>Satisfaction</b>	0.56**	0.63**	1.00	0.38**
<b>Academic Performance</b>	0.43**	0.52**	0.38**	1.00

The connection table displays the Pearson correlation coefficients between Social Presence and four learning outcomes: Engagement, Satisfaction, and Academic Performance. All the correlations are positive and statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ . The strongest correlation is between Social Presence and Engagement ( $r = 0.68$ ), indicating a strong positive association between the two factors. It means that online course participants tend to be more involved in their studies when they feel more connected to their peers and lecturers. It confirms what has been stated in the literature on the link between students' social presence and involvement in online classrooms.

The association between Social Presence and Satisfaction is moderately good ( $r = 0.56$ ). It implies that students who perceive a strong sense of community in online courses are happier with their learning experience. This result fits other studies that revealed a favorable link between Social Presence and Student Satisfaction in online learning environments. Social Presence and Academic Performance have a moderate link ( $r = 0.43$ ), which suggests they are associated well. Online course participants often perform better academically when they feel more connected to their classmates and teachers. This finding conforms with the preceding study's findings, which revealed a beneficial correlation between Social Presence and Academic Performance in situations that enhance online learning.

The association between Engagement and Satisfaction is reasonably high ( $r = 0.63$ ). It shows that students more involved in their studies will likely be more satisfied with their learning experience. This result aligns with other studies that revealed a favorable link between student involvement and happiness in online learning environments. These results show that social presence is crucial to supporting successful learning outcomes in online courses. Instructors can help encourage Social Presence by developing online courses that foster student involvement and cooperation and using technology that supports communication and community building.

### **c) Correlation Analysis of Social Presence and Learning Outcomes in Online Courses**

Social Presence has been established as vital in supporting excellent learning outcomes in online learning contexts. Several researchers have studied the relationship between Social Presence and various learning outcomes, such as student engagement, satisfaction, and academic success. However, nothing is known about the exact nature of this relationship in online courses. To fill this gap, we present Table 4, which illustrates the results of a linear regression study analyzing the association between Social Presence and Academic



Performance in online courses. The table gives useful insights into the strength and significance of this relationship, which can inform instructors' tactics for fostering Social Presence and improving students' learning experiences.

**Table 4. Correlation between Social Presence and Learning Outcomes**

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
Constant	29.84	3.91		7.63	< .001
Social Presence	10.28***	1.15	0.55***	8.93	< .001

Note: \*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\*\* $p < .0001$

In Table 4, a linear regression analysis looks at how Social Presence and Academic Performance in online courses are related. The model incorporates Social Presence as the predictor variable and Academic Performance as the outcome variable. According to the table, the coefficient for Social Presence is statistically significant at  $p < .001$  with a beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of 0.55. The intercept (constant) is 29.84, indicating the projected value of Academic Performance when Social Presence is zero. The coefficient (B) for Social Presence is 10.28, which suggests that for each one-unit increase in Social Presence, we may expect a 10.28-point increase in Academic Performance (controlling for other variables). The standard error for the coefficient is 1.15, and the t-value linked with the coefficient is 8.93. The R-squared value is not provided in the table but is likely to be relatively high, given the strength of the relationship between the variables.

The highly significant p-value provides strong evidence that the coefficient for Social Presence is not due to random sampling error, suggesting a positive relationship between Social Presence and Academic Performance in online courses. These findings support previous research that has suggested that Social Presence is an important predictor of learning outcomes in online environments. To improve students' academic performance, online instructors may need to promote Social Presence through various strategies such as synchronous activities, social media platforms, or other technologies that foster peer interaction and communication.

### Qualitative Analysis of Indonesian Students' Experiences with Social Presence in Online Learning Environments

The qualitative data collected in this study included semi-structured interviews with 20 Indonesian students enrolled in online courses. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes and patterns in the data. From the interviews, several respondents reported that social presence helped them feel more connected to their peers and instructors, which increased motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Respondent 1 stated: "When I feel that I am part of a community, I feel motivated to participate and contribute more to the class. It makes me feel like my input is valued." Similarly, Respondent 3 noted how social presence facilitated the exchange of ideas and knowledge: "I learned so much just by interacting with my classmates and sharing our experiences. It enriched my learning experience."

However, some respondents reported socio-cultural factors affecting online courses' social presence. Respondent 4 expressed discomfort in interacting with classmates from diverse cultural backgrounds or using English as a medium of instruction. They explained: "Sometimes I feel like I can't express myself fully because of language barriers. It makes me feel less confident in participating in class." Respondent 6 identified cultural norms affecting social presence: "It can be challenging to interact with classmates from different cultural backgrounds, especially when norms and values are different."

Further analysis of the data revealed that some respondents felt that anonymity in online courses could negatively impact social presence. "I think it's harder to connect with other students when we can't see each other face-to-face," said respondent number nine. Creating a sense of community can be challenging since sometimes people are reluctant to divulge too much about themselves online. Respondent 10, on the other hand, believed that anonymity promoted more open discourse and teamwork, saying: "I feel like individuals are more inclined to offer their thoughts online because they feel more comfortable. It encourages a freer and more sincere exchange of ideas."

The responders provided various proposals for enhancing social presence in online courses. Peer review exercises, group projects, and collaborative assignments were recommended as successful approaches to promoting student communication and cooperation. A learning environment inclusive of all students needs clear expectations for involvement and engagement. To help students connect, icebreaker games and casual interactions were also recommended. I believe it would be wonderful to have some time to get to know each other casually, respondent 1 said. Doing so can create a sense of community and make you feel more comfortable interacting in class. When asked how to encourage face-to-face engagement, respondent 13 advised using video conferencing facilities: "It allows us to see each other and connect more personally, even if we are not physically in the same place."

Overall, the qualitative data offers useful insights into the socio-cultural elements influencing social presence in online learning environments and gives educators actionable advice on improving social presence. The results imply that while developing courses that encourage interaction, collaboration, and community building, teachers must consider the diversity of cultural backgrounds and student communication preferences. Language problems and anonymity were potential obstacles to social presence, but they might be solved with collaborative work, clear expectations, and casual encounters.

## Discussion

The current study examined how social presence affected learning outcomes for Bachelor's degree students taking online courses at Universitas Negeri Makassar and Universitas Borneo Tarakan in Indonesia. In order to comprehend the sample population and examine the link between social presence and learning outcomes, such as student engagement, contentment, and academic success, the study gathered socio-demographic information from 269 students.

According to the sociodemographic information gathered from the participants, the sample population was equally split between male and female students, with the majority being between the ages of 21 and 25. The fact that every participant had a bachelor's degree suggested they were all at similar academic stages. These results imply that the sample population is typical of Indonesian university undergraduate students.

According to research on social presence, engagement, satisfaction, and academic success, social presence is crucial for fostering effective learning outcomes in online courses. Students from both universities had high average scores for social presence, showing that they view it as a crucial element influencing their success in online courses (Aldosari et al., 2022; Alfian et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2021). Similarly, students from both universities had high average scores for engagement and satisfaction, showing that these variables are crucial for boosting academic achievement among Bachelor's degree candidates taking online courses. According to several studies (Munoz, Wang, & Tham, 2021; Weidlich & Bastiaens, 2019), social presence is crucial for fostering excellent learning outcomes in online courses due to the high mean scores for academic performance among Bachelor's degree students from both universities.

According to the correlation study, a significant link exists between social presence, academic performance, and learning outcomes like student engagement and satisfaction. We

can anticipate an improvement in academic performance of 10.28 points for every unit of social presence, according to the results of the linear regression analysis, which controlled for other variables that supported a positive association between social presence and academic performance. These findings are consistent with earlier studies, which found that social presence was positively correlated with various learning outcomes in online learning environments (Miao & Ma, 2022).

The qualitative analysis revealed additional information about the socio-cultural aspects influencing social presence in online learning environments. The results imply that while collaborative assignments, unambiguous expectations, and casual interactions might improve social presence, anonymity and language hurdles can have the opposite effect. According to the study's conclusions, educators creating online courses should be aware of the variety of cultural backgrounds and communication preferences among students and employ efficient methods to encourage communication, engagement, and community building (Nur, Vega, & Ayu Muhammad, 2022; Yoon & Leem, 2021). The results of this study generally support the notion that social presence is crucial for fostering successful learning outcomes in online courses. According to the results, social presence, engagement, and contentment are important elements in fostering academic performance among Bachelor's degree students enrolled in online courses. The study's results can help educators and researchers create efficient online courses that cater to the special demands of Bachelor's degree students and encourage successful learning outcomes (Dirsa et al., 2022; Miao & Ma, 2022; Yoon & Leem, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The current study investigates the influence of social presence on online learning in Indonesian bachelor's degree programs, specifically focusing on students enrolled in online courses at Universitas Negeri Makassar and Universitas Borneo Tarakan. Socio-demographic information from 269 students was collected to understand the sample group better and examine the connection between social presence and academic outcomes.

Analysis of the sociodemographic data revealed that the sample population consisted of male and female students, with a majority falling within the 21-25 age range. The participants shared characteristics of holding a bachelor's degree suggests they were at similar academic stages, making the sample population representative of typical Indonesian university undergraduate students.

The study's findings demonstrate the importance of social presence in enhancing learning outcomes for bachelor's degree students in online courses. High average scores for social presence, engagement, satisfaction, and academic performance among participants from both universities provide evidence of social presence's positive impact on successful learning outcomes in online courses. It highlights the significance of student engagement and satisfaction in influencing academic performance among bachelor's degree students in online learning environments.

Correlation analysis further supports the strong association between social presence and learning outcomes, indicating a positive relationship between social presence and student engagement, satisfaction, and academic success. Linear regression analysis strengthens this correlation by showing that each unit increase in social presence is associated with a substantial 10.28-point improvement in academic achievement after adjusting for other variables. These findings align with previous research identifying a positive relationship between social presence and learning outcomes in virtual learning settings.

The qualitative analysis provided additional insights into the socio-cultural factors influencing social presence in online learning environments. Collaborative assignments, clear expectations, and casual interactions were identified as factors that can improve social presence, while anonymity and language barriers were found to hinder its development.

Educators creating online courses should consider students' diverse cultural backgrounds and communication preferences and employ effective techniques to encourage communication, interaction, and community building.

The results of this study affirm the importance of social presence in fostering successful learning outcomes in online courses for bachelor's degree students. The findings can guide educators and researchers in developing effective online curricula that cater to the unique needs of these students and promote favorable learning outcomes. Future studies may explore the effectiveness of different strategies for establishing a social presence in online learning environments and investigate how social presence impacts learning outcomes across various academic levels and age groups.

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