Closeness and belongingness: boosting student engagement in Jakarta universities

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Abstract Aside from academic activities, university life is enriched by extracurricular or community events that foster organisational skills and competency development. According to previous studies, university students who are motivated to grow personally are those who have aspirations for their future careers. Another factor that encourages active participation in organisational activities is a sense of belonging. Students' active participation will contribute positively to organisational development. This study uses the lens of weak ties theory, which contrasts with the notion that people with strong relationships are more inclined to provide benefits in certain contexts. This study will use network analytic techniques to determine the extent of relationships between university students through UCINET software. The study aims to identify whether weak interpersonal interactions among students can promote their community engagement. The relationship analysis will relate to the level of their sense of belonging, obtained from questionnaire responses. The data were processed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis through SPSS. The results demonstrate that weak relationships and a sense of belonging positively impact member engagement in organisation. This study aims to contribute by offering a hitherto limited analysis of student organisations using the weak ties theory and network analysis method.

Keywords: closeness; engagement; network analysis; sense of belonging; strength of weak ties theory

INTRODUCTION
Higher education provides structured learning opportunities that allow individuals to acquire diverse knowledge and experiences. In an academic environment, students come together to form a unique structure known as the academic community (Lukman, 2022). There are various options for internal organisations to maximise university students' potential, including student associations, where engagement aligns with their interests and talents (Lukman, 2022). Participating in extracurricular activities, such as student associations, enables students to take charge of their development and cultivate leadership qualities that will benefit them (Smith & Chenoweth, 2015).

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Previous studies have demonstrated that the development of interpersonal skills is essential to meet the demands of the modern workplace. A graduate-level course focusing on developing interpersonal skills relevant to hiring managers' requirements is necessary (Fulmore et al., 2023). Interpersonal abilities that arise in encounters between individuals include building social relationships through communicating, gaining power and influence, motivating others, and managing conflict (Whetten & Cameron, 2023). Whetten and Cameron (2023) explain that most business schools offer a corporate communication curriculum, while many universities have academic departments devoted to the study of communication, and numerous corporations employ public communication experts. Personal and interpersonal skills are essential for achieving a high-level career, as leaders are expected to manage teams efficiently. This study uses graduate students in communication as research subjects and identifies that communication students are expected to possess strong interpersonal skills and communicate effectively in this context. They use these abilities to foster relationships among students. Moreover, they can encourage one another to actively enhance their leadership skills.

Encouraging students to participate actively in student organisations presents unique challenges. The university is facing a challenge on how to encourage generation Zs students to take part in student activities. According to the theory of self-determination, students who value knowledge the most when engaging in activities that have the potential to mould their character are the most motivated (Kumendong & Panjaitan, 2021). Positive attitudes and high aspirations for their future careers significantly influence students' involvement in academic and student activities, enriching their experiences in the university (Trolian, 2019).

In this study, the Postgraduate Student Association of Communication Science at one of the prominent universities in Jakarta serves as the research object. The organisation is committed to being a catalyst in driving collaboration among postgraduate students and various stakeholders to create beneficial, impactful, and inspiring academic and non-academic activities. This study originates from various instances concerning the prevalence of low member engagement in organisations, regardless of size. Many members exhibit apathy towards the community, influenced by factors like culture, the nature of the information received, and organisational support for member engagement (Miller, 2015). The researcher's perspective suggests that organisation members have not been particularly intensive or effective in interacting with new students. Additionally, this organisation officially established in early 2022 still requires support in its development. Therefore, this research employs the strength of weak ties theory to examine how ties are formed within a student community that can influence their engagement level in an organisation. This study aims to contribute both theoretically and practically in formulating strategies for effectively managing an organisation to enhance member engagement to its fullest potential.

Mark S. Granovetter, an American sociologist who introduced the concept of the strength of weak ties, researched a group of working-class individuals in North Boston, United States. Those with fewer relationships are likely to move within different social circles and access a wider range of information, which can lead to job opportunities through connections (M. S. Granovetter, 1973). This contrasts with the idea that individuals with whom we have strong bonds are typically more motivated to provide job-related assistance. A denser network increases the likelihood that information is consistent, whereas weak ties can enhance access to diverse information (Granovetter, 1983). Granovetter (1973) describes the strength of a tie as a combination, likely linear, of factors such as time spent together, emotional depth, intimacy, and reciprocal support that define the relationship.

Bridging social capital, which can generate broader and mutually beneficial identities, is distinguished from bonding social capital, which reinforces narrower identities (Putnam, 2000). Bridging social capital is linked to what network researchers term weak ties, informal connections among individuals that can provide fresh viewpoints and information (Granovetter, 1983). Thus, research reinforces Granovetter's concept that while strong ties are individually more impactful, the abundance of weak ties facilitates the dissemination of new information, so weak ties may have a more significant role in the spread of information (Bakshy et al., 2012).

Several studies substantiate Granovetter's idea regarding the potency of weak ties. Through consensus language, weak ties exerted more substantial social influence than strong ties using similar language (Lee & Kronrod, 2020). Considering the impact of technology, the

study discovered that a higher percentage of weak connections in an individual's social network can offer substantial and more easily accessible social support than close relationships (Rozzell et al., 2014). In line with Granovetter's thesis, Bakshy et al. (2012) propose that weak ties in interaction tendencies can disseminate novel information that might otherwise remain undistributed. Weak ties may be less effective individually in transmitting information but collectively contribute to significant successes, such as finding employment and generating innovative ideas, across multiple countries (Gee et al., 2017).

Contrary to Granovetter's claims regarding the subjectivity of evaluations of social support, research suggests that strong ties are highly esteemed for offering diverse forms of social support. Meanwhile, weak relationships are thought to provide less informational and emotional assistance (Krämer et al., 2021). The theoretical foundation includes previous studies that support the concept of the strength of weak ties. In contrast, another study indicates that strong relationships are more beneficial in providing informational and emotional support. Granovetter (1973) distinguished between two types of dyadic relationships, categorising them as either strong or weak ties within the context of relational relationships.

Adolescents' relationships with friends and family are characterised by closeness, which indicates the degree of interconnectedness between the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of the two parties (Laursen et al., 2000). Emerging from the emotional aspect of the coach-athlete relationship, subsequent characteristics of closeness, represent the emotional connection between athletes and coaches, encompassing trust, likability, and respect (Gu et al., 2023). Furthermore, Gu et al. (2023) convey that the coach-athlete relationship (CAR), characterised by complementarity, commitment, and closeness, where the latter variable reflects the emotional bond between coach and athlete, has minimal influence. In the teacher-child relationship, the measure of closeness gauges a teacher's sense of warmth and open communication with the child, exemplified by the children openly sharing their feelings and experiences with the teacher (X. Zhang & Sun, 2011). In the student-teacher relationship, one crucial dimension is closeness or intimacy, which can influence student engagement in school (Wu et al., 2022). Wu et al. (2022) indicate a positive correlation between teacher-student closeness and cooperative participation, independent student involvement, and overall fondness for school, while showing a negative correlation with school absenteeism.

Upon further observation by researchers, a phenomenon was noticed; students selected for important roles within the community gradually became less active over time. Numerous studies suggest that a sense of belonging is a primary factor influencing participation. Students who possess a sense of belonging to the campus community are more engaged in academic and social activities, although first-generation students still find it challenging (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). This study used a sense of belonging as one of the indicators influencing behaviours and actions that demonstrate activeness.

Furthermore, a sense of belonging has a favourable correlation with alumni engagement and volunteerism, among other forms of active participation (Drezner & Pizmony-Levy, 2021). The sense of belonging appears to significantly influence emotional patterns and cognitive processes, and the absence of belonging results in significant deprivation, leading to various negative effects. Much of human behaviour, emotion, and thought is shaped by this fundamental interpersonal motive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). One subjective psychological component that gauges a student's feelings of unity and connection to the school as a whole is the sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Students from historically marginalised groups may experience heightened concerns regarding belonging that can ultimately undermine their motivation and engagement (Yeager et al., 2013). Enhancing feelings of trust and belonging among university students from underrepresented groups will liberate them to focus more on academics and extracurricular activities (Steele, 2010).

Engagement, which can be evaluated from various aspects, supports the development of an organisation. Employee engagement programmes enhance the organisation's reputation (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015). Initially, interest denotes an individual's inherent appeal to a subject (Yang et al., 2022). Student engagement in campus organisation activities aids students developing holistically, identifying potential talents, and building social and professional networks. Low motivation to take an active role and insufficient understanding of the organisation contribute to low engagement. Employee engagement and the intent to remain in the organisation are influenced by the relationships and behaviours present in their work

environment (John, 2022). Workplace relationships and behaviours play a role in shaping the intention to remain engaged in the organisation. Scholars describe engagement as a positive and satisfying state of mind related to work, characterised by enthusiasm and dedication (John, 2022).

While other research is limited to emotional engagement, this study also examines behavioural engagement and actions that support student achievement (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). Behavioural engagement involves completing tasks and adhering to guidelines, emotional engagement entails interest, emotions, and values, while cognitive engagement encompasses motivation and effort (Fredricks et al., 2004). Student engagement is assessed using scales such as the enjoyment of participating in school activities or events and low levels of school avoidance (Wu et al., 2022). Behavioural engagement refers to cooperative participation, compliance with class rules, and students taking the initiative to demonstrate independent behaviour in the classroom (Wu et al., 2022). Meanwhile, alumni engagement is the ongoing interaction post-graduation between graduates and their alma mater, including philanthropic contributions, events participation, volunteering , and reading alumni association publications (Drezner & Pizmony-Levy, 2021). Engagement becomes a crucial psychological aspect that assists athletes in remaining committed to training and competitions with enthusiasm and vitality (Wu et al., 2022).

Graduate communication students are expected to have developed communication as a crucial interpersonal skill in the workplace. This study investigates whether students can establish social networks, interpersonal or otherwise. It aims to determine whether the social networks formed influence students' enjoyment and willingness to engage in student community activities. Furthermore, the study examines the impact of another factor, a sense of belonging, on students' motivation to actively participate in organisations. This study involves an organisation whose members come from diverse backgrounds, united by a common goal of academic achievement. The cross-generational subjects of the network analysis research include people who have established careers and Generation Zs, who have yet to experience the workforce, thus expanding upon earlier studies.

This study will identify the nature of the network, whether strong or weak ties and its correlation to student engagement in associations. The other factor is a sense of belonging, as humans are fundamentally motivated by a need to belong that has behavioural implications. (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Therefore, the researcher believes that a sense of belonging needs to be studied to determine whether it influences an individual's level of participation, manifested through actions rather than merely a feeling of motivation. This study aims to explore whether these two variables positively influence students' engagement in university organisations.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a positivistic paradigm, a quantitative approach alongside questionnaires for data collection. Survey research provides a numerical representation of trends, attitudes, or opinions within a population by examining a sample that accurately reflects that population (Creswell, 2013). Aiming to explore the concept of closeness, this research utilises communication network analysis based on the strength of ties theory. Analysing communication networks is a technique employed to examine the communication framework and the functions of entities, including individuals, organisations, and institutions, within that structure (Eriyanto, 2014).

Sampling in network research possesses distinct characteristics compared to other quantitative research approaches, as network studies delve into the entire network and the connections among actors rather than focusing solely on individual entities (Eriyanto, 2014). This suggests that identifying the population for network research is more intricate and complex than in other research methodologies such as surveys and experiments, as communication networks can extend beyond geographical boundaries. For instance, students enrolled at the university may establish connections not only within the same university student community but also cultivate friendship networks beyond the confines of the campus. In communication network research, a census is generally used rather than a sample to describe all actors (Eriyanto, 2014). The questionnaire forms were distributed to postgraduate students of the Communication Science Department, class of 2022-2023. Forms were provided to the students who are already active in student communities, as well as those who are not. Within the questionnaire form, the

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researcher included a note requesting participants to include close friends within the scope of the graduate programme in communication. Ultimately, the final sample comprised 83 in Master's degree and 7 in Doctorate.

The sampling technique employed in this study is a small group sample. Sampling from a small group stands as the optimal choice when selecting samples for network analysis methods (M. Granovetter, 1976). The survey for participants was conducted during the latter half of 2023. Determinism implies that a thorough examination of connections between variables is crucial for addressing inquiries and hypotheses via surveys and experiments (Creswell, 2013). Closeness was measured using three questions rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The highest score indicates frequent communication among students, while the lowest score suggests a lack of communication. Example questions include "How often do you hang out together outside the campus environment?". Sense of belonging is measured using four questions assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, with higher values signifying positive or negative perceptions towards the organisation. Engagement measurement employed six questions assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, with sample questions including "I have been involved as a committee member in the organisation events". Data was processed using software to obtain closeness values and network mapping with UCINET. The proximity dataset was then subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS. This study also utilised SPSS for multiple linear regression analysis to examine the influence relationship between two independent variables and one dependent variable (Zahriyah et al., 2021). The research formulates the following hypotheses: the conceptual framework refers to Figure 1.
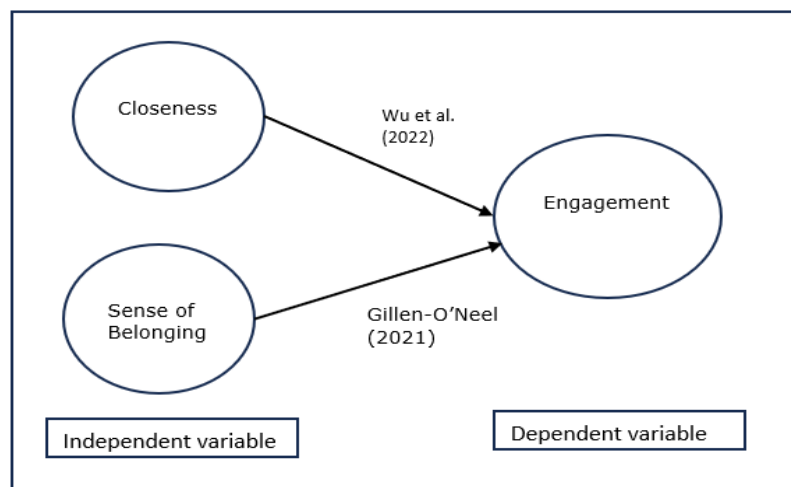

Figure 1. Conceptual Frameworks
Source: processed based on the articles by Wu et al.(2022), Gillen-O'Neel (2021)

H1: There is a positive influence of closeness on organisational engagement.
H2: There is a positive influence of a sense of belonging on organisational engagement.
H3: There is a simultaneous influence of closeness and a sense of belonging on organisational engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The study utilised data collected through questionnaire responses from 90 graduate students in the Communication Science Department from 2022 to 2023. The respondents consisted of 32.2 % males and 67.8 % females. According to the educational level, 92.2% of respondents are at the S2 level and 7.8% at the S3 level. Regarding university enrolment, 28.9% from the class of 2022 and 71.1% from the class of 2023 (See Table 1).

As shown in Table 2, the descriptive statistics indicate that respondents' perceptions of closeness typically range from a low to moderate range when considering the span between the minimum and maximum values. This shows that relationships among the members who participated in this research are characterised as the weak ties. Participants were tasked to nominate individuals they frequently meet and converse with and those they admire in the classroom (Shin, 2022). Based on the questionnaire responses, only a small number of students have strong connections with their peers positioning them as central figures within the networks.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Respondents

Characteristics	n	%
Sex	90	100%
Male	29	32.2%
Female	61	67.8%
Education		
Postgraduate Master	83	92.2%
Postgraduate Doctor	7	7.8%
University Intake		
Class of 2022	26	28.9%
Class of 2023	64	71.1%

Source: processed by author (2024)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Closeness Variable

Closeness Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
Indicator 1	0	37	10.57	8.622
Indicator 2	0	30	8.87	7.591
Indicator 3	0	32	11.03	7.916

Source: processed by author (2024)

In this research, the network analysis among organisation members concentrates on exploring the patterns of interaction among students and identifying the actors most frequently contacted and those who initiate contact with others. The network pattern among graduate students in the Communication Science Programme, as members of the student community is illustrated in Figure 2. The figure reveals five distinct networks, reflecting the division of classes in 2022 and 2023 as well as between regular and exclusive classes. The illustration portrays fragmented relationship patterns, with multiple central actors, depending on each group's network.
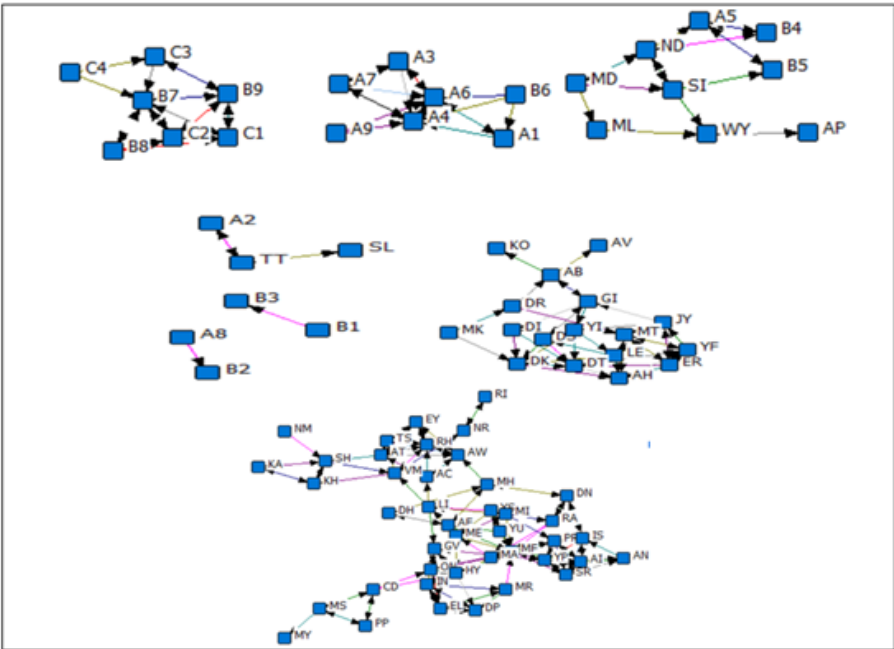

Figure 2. The Communication Network Among Student Community Members 2022-2023
Source: processed by author (2024)

After examining the relationships formed among actors, several individuals occupy central positions. In the largest network depicted in Figure 2, YP and AW emerge as central actors, representing two different classes. In other networks, A6, B9, YF, and SI become central actors within their respective networks where they are situated. The calculation of communication network elements was conducted using UCINET, with the data further analysed

using SPSS to assess the significance of the relationship between closeness and a sense of belonging in engagement.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Sense of Belonging Variable

Sense of Belonging Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
Indicator 1	3	5	4.18	0.758
Indicator 2	1	5	3.13	1.265
Indicator 3	1	5	3.11	1.146
Indicator 4	2	5	4.12	0.776

Source: processed by author (2024)

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Engagement Variable

Engagement Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
Indicator 1	1	5	2.89	1.185
Indicator 2	1	5	3.16	1.217
Indicator 3	1	5	3.14	1.232
Indicator 4	1	5	3.22	1.388
Indicator 5	1	5	3.44	1.072
Indicator 6	1	5	2.41	1.476

Source: processed by author (2024)

According to the sense of belonging variable, respondents' belief that they benefit greatly from the organisation's existence holds the highest value (4.18). However, their motivation to participate in activities is lower (3.11). Details of the descriptive test results for the sense of belonging variable can be seen in Table 3; and for the engagement variable in Table 4. The statistical test results also show that respondents highly enjoy attending community events or activities (3.44), and a relatively high number of respondents frequently visit the organisation's social media (3.16), though fewer are involved as organisers in activities (2.41).

The validity testing for all indicators used across the three variables has been conducted, with all results deemed valid. The range of validity values for each indicator, ranging from 0.674 to 0.940, details are presented in Table 5. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the sample of examiners. In this analysis, Cronbach's alpha value exceeds 0.60 for all 13 items, thus indicating that the data is reliable. The range of values for each indicator, which falls between 0.783 and 0.915, is presented in Table 6.

Table 5. Research Instrument Validity Test Result

Indicators	Validity Test Result	Information
Variable: Closeness		
Indicator 1	0.911**	Valid
Indicator 2	0.940**	Valid
Indicator 3	0.927**	Valid
Variable: Sense of Belonging		
Indicator 1	0.674**	Valid
Indicator 2	0.867**	Valid
Indicator 3	0.902**	Valid
Indicator 4	0.653**	Valid
Variable: Engagement		
Indicator 1	0.810**	Valid
Indicator 2	0.712**	Valid
Indicator 3	0.848**	Valid
Indicator 4	0.776**	Valid
Indicator 5	0.824**	Valid
Indicator 6	0.744**	Valid

** The validity test value is significant at 0.01

Source: processed by author (2024)

Table 6. Research Instrument Reliability Test Result

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Information
Closeness	3	0.915	Reliable
Sense of Belonging	4	0.783	Reliable
Engagement	6	0.870	Reliable

Source: processed by author (2024)

Before performing multiple regression analyses to investigate the impacts of the variables under study, it is essential to carry out classic assumption tests. Classic assumption tests include normality, heteroskedasticity, multicollinearity, and linearity. The details of the test results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Classic Assumption Test Results

Type	Test Results	Information
Normality Test		
Sig.	0.185	Normal Distribution
Heteroskedasticity Test		
Sig.		
Closeness	0.518	No heteroskedasticity
Sense of Belonging	0.413	No heteroskedasticity
Multicollinearity Test		
Tolerance		
Closeness	0.951	No Multicollinearity
Sense of Belonging	0.951	No Multicollinearity
VIF		
Closeness	1.051	No Multicollinearity
Sense of Belonging	1.051	No Multicollinearity
Linearity Test		
Deviation from Linearity	0.364	Data Linear

Source: processed by author (2024)

The normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with the criterion that the data follows a normal distribution if the significance exceeds 0.05. The result indicates a value of 0.185, verifying that the data follows a normal distribution. To ensure the efficiency of regression coefficients, heteroskedasticity should be absent from the regression model. The study employed the Glejser test, where a significance value above 0.05 indicates the absence of heteroskedasticity. The results indicate that the significance values for closeness and sense of belonging exceed 0.05.

The method of multicollinearity testing involves assessing the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. The test results show tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF values below 10, indicating no symptoms of multicollinearity. The method used to test linearity in this study involved employing analysis of variance (ANOVA) techniques and examining the deviation from linearity. The value exceeds 0.05, suggesting a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

As shown in Table 8, after all variables were included, the multiple linear regression model was completed with the assistance of the SPSS software. Dimensions of close relationships and the sense of belonging of university students significantly contribute (F = 61.300, P<0.05) and predict 57.5 % of engagement in university organisations (adjusted R^2 value). Moreover, there is a notable positive impact of 27.7 % linking closeness and organisational engagement (standardised coefficient = 0.277, p<0.05). There is also a significant positive effect of 65.4 % of a sense of belonging on organisational engagement (standardised coefficient = 0.654, p<0.05), detailed in Table 8.

Table 8. Regression Analysis Results

Predictors Variables	β	t	Sig.
Closeness	0.277	3.912	<0.01
Sense of Belonging	0.654	9.236	<0.01
Adjusted R² = 0.575, F = 61.300			

Source: processed by author (2024)

Hypothesis 1 (H1) is found to be supported, as the key dimensions of close relationships among university students, such as frequency of hangouts together, openness, and sharing personal stories are identified. The relationships among students in this study are classified as weak, which positively contribute to their engagement levels within the university organisation. Hypothesis 2 (H2) is also validated showing that the elements of a sense of belonging, such as the description of student feeling level about the organisation and the organisation's capability to meet the needs of its members, positively influence student engagement level.
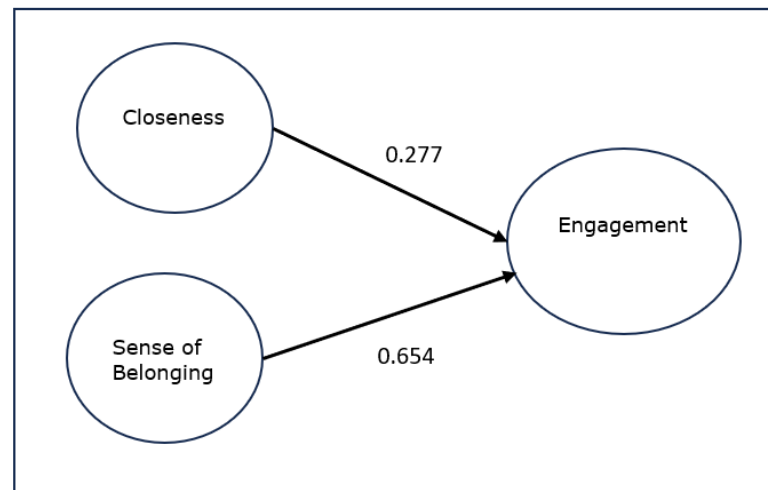

Figure 3. Research Findings
Source: processed by author (2024)

This section draws on research findings that support H1, suggesting a positive impact of closeness on engagement. It also validates the suitability of applying Granovetter's theory (the strength of weak ties) within this study. From an individual's perspective, weak ties serve as essential resources in enabling mobility opportunities, while from a macroscopic viewpoint, they play a part in fostering social cohesion. When individuals switch jobs, they not only transition to a different network but also establish connections between networks (M. S. Granovetter, 1973). Previous studies provide empirical evidence supporting the notion of weak ties. These offer insights absent in tightly knit, diverse, and non-excessive environments, where discussions among weak ties emerge as the most influential predictor of civil behaviour and involvement. Interactions with weak ties provide access to diverse and unique information and resources beyond one's immediate network, potentially opening up new opportunities for civic engagement (de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011). The advantage of weak ties lies in capturing social interactions through word of mouth, which determine factors like message sources, credibility, and timing of message delivery within relationships perceived as fresh and non-repetitive (Lee & Kronrod, 2020).

The other finding supports H2, indicating a significant positive influence of a sense of belonging on engagement. At an individual level, students who in comparison to their peers, demonstrate a greater sense of belonging, typically exhibit greater emotional and behavioural engagement as well (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). This research suggests that institutions aiming to engage alumni from their graduate programmes should take into account the connection between student experiences and a sense of belonging, as it is connected to their future engagement (Drezner & Pizmony-Levy, 2021). Furthermore, the results of the t-test indicate that the t-value is greater than the t-table and the significance is below 0.05. Hypothesis 3 (H3) is seen to have a concurrent impact of both closeness and sense of belonging on engagement, as evidenced by their significant contributions to the F-test value of 61.300.

There are theoretical implications of the research findings, particularly concerning the theory of weak ties. According to this concept, individuals outside of students' social circles often provide information about university community events. Students seem to prioritise academic information over community-related information. Therefore, this research incorporates the

variable of a sense of belonging to demonstrate other motivating factors for student engagement in organisations.

In terms of practical implications, the research suggests that campus organisation leaders should adopt strategic approaches, particularly when engaging with new students. It is essential to convey the idea that engagement in the community will foster interpersonal skills without sacrificing academic obligations. Determining the network structure can assist communities to become accommodating to students' different cultures. Communities can also utilise central actors to disseminate positive information about the organisation.

Close relationships are categorised into two types, strong ties and weak ties (Y. Zhang et al., 2022). Adolescents engage in social interactions with peers in various ways, such as spending leisure time with a group of friends or forming close and intimate relationships with a select few (Shin, 2020). The closeness among students and intense interaction with peers can impact the effectiveness of interventions targeting adolescents. Adolescents benefit from academic engagement when affiliated with highly active and high-achieving peers (Shin, 2022). In this study, university students demonstrated infrequent weak connections, evident in the sparse discussions concerning non-academic or personal subjects. The concept of strong and weak ties applies significantly to large organisations, such as private companies (Kong & su, 2019). The current research findings indicate that the collective influence of weak ties positively affects engagement. In the postgraduate student environment, the more frequently students interact in university activities, including student community activities, the greater the influence to encourage each other to be involved in campus organisational activities.

Changes in students' interest in and enjoyment of academic activities were found to correlate with fluctuations in their sense of belonging. (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). The other previous study demonstrates a positive connection between the sense of belonging and various forms of alumni engagement, such as actions like staying updated with news, assisting students, participating in events, or dedicating time to volunteer work (Drezner & Pizmony-Levy, 2021). In the current study, participants' responses data indicate that students' positive feelings towards the presence of the student community positively influence their participation in the organisation's activities.

CONCLUSION

Examining the influence of weak ties among postgraduate students and their sense of belonging towards student organisations, this study found that the networks formed by students, while weak, positively affect their engagement in the organisation. The descriptive test results indicate average values of 10.57, 8.87, and 11.03 for each of the closeness variables. These values suggest that the respondents rarely share personal or family information and do not often hang out with fellow postgraduate students they consider their closest friends on campus. The findings highlight the formation of weak tie networks. Based on the findings of the multiple linear regression analysis, closeness has a substantial positive influence of 27,7% on organisational engagement (standard coefficient = 0.277, $p<0.05$). Similarly, the sense of belonging significantly positively influences student participation in the organisation by 65,4% (standard coefficient=0.654, $p<0.05$). The study results illustrate how both weak ties and a sense of belonging can positively influence engagement.

The level of closeness among students is relatively low and provides information about student organisation, which impacts their engagement levels. These weak relationships are categorised by the low frequency of conversations about personal issues compared to discussions about lectures and coursework. Both closeness and a sense of belonging simultaneously exert a positive influence on engagement.

This research enriches the literature by applying the strength of weak ties theory, demonstrating that information obtained from less close acquaintances can provide additional insights into student organisations, thereby enhancing community engagement. This study also focuses on intergenerational relationships within the university, specifically between millennials and Gen Z, which further underscores the presence of weak ties networks in this context.

However, this study has certain limitations, particularly regarding the relatively small number of participants, given the size of the student organisation. Future research should aim to improve the methodology by incorporating observational studies and interviews to gain deeper insights, which may help mitigate potential biases in survey results. Future research should

expand the model by examining student organisations in other cities to explore whether cultural factors, such as differences in student cultures between urban and rural areas, influence the degree of closeness.

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