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Exploring new feedback practices paradigm in higher education: students' perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Feedback has recently shifted from being received to being an interaction process, raising considerable interest among educators. This study aims to examine whether current feedback practices in higher education have led to active student interaction processes, and how individual and contextual factors are considered in practice based on gender and university perspectives. An online questionnaire was used to collect data from 418 students from three Indonesian universities, Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM), Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang (UMP), and Universitas Sulawesi Barat (USB). The data was analyzed descriptively-quantitatively. Results indicate that current feedback practices do not adequately direct students to actively participate in the processing feedback. The feedback received is dominated by general feedback (UNM and USB), while detailed and discussed feedback is generally received by UMP students. Additionally, the expected and effective feedback obtained the same pattern that individuals and groups must interact which is in line with the new paradigm. The results also showed the ideal time for providing feedback is 5-10 days for various types of assignments and 15-20 days for theses. These results provide educators with information on strategies and approaches in feedback practices that are relevant and effective in enhancing student learning based on the new paradigm.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Feedback practice is an integral part of learning in higher education. In the past five years, feedback research has gained a lot of attention and increased, such as research related to feedback literacy [1]–[3], effective feedback model [4]–[7], and the correlation between feedback and self-efficacy [8]. The feedback research trend will continue to develop as an important component in realizing the implementation of effective learning in schools and higher education [9], [10], as well as its potential to improve learning outcomes and performance [11], [12], and student motivation [13], [14]. However, in actual practice, feedback does not always involve students as envisaged [15]. These results serve as the foundation for a paradigm shift toward feedback and serve as a reference for related research.

The old feedback paradigm places students only as information recipients and tends to be passive [16]. Student dissatisfaction can be seen from various aspects of this practice. Feedback comments are

considered irrelevant to the assignment given, the content is unclear and ambiguous [17], and students are reluctant to use the feedback provided [15]. Meanwhile, the latest view places feedback as a process of interaction between the recipient and the giver of feedback which emphasizes the active involvement of students in the information they receive [8], [18], [19]. Sources of feedback information do not only come from lecturers but through a reconstruction process by interacting and having a dialogue with information sources with colleagues, even yourself [20]. This difference in views shows that current feedback does not only depend on the message given, but also on how the message is conveyed, received, and processed. Feedback as an interaction process is influenced by various factors that affect the quality of receiving feedback. Culture influences attitudes and acceptance of feedback [21], [22], as well as an understanding of its role in the feedback process [23]. It was further explained that the interaction between contextual variables and individual variables determines the active involvement of students based on feedback [24]. Contextual variables related to the higher education environment such as the textual level (features in feedback), interpersonal (relationship with the teacher), teaching level (instructor, curriculum), and sociocultural (teacher and student roles) [24]–[27]. The individual dimension relates to one's beliefs and goals related to feedback [28], experience in receiving feedback [22], [25], [29], as well as one's academic abilities [30] including gender differences [31].

The importance of feedback in higher education has been studied, but the main issue is that feedback practices have not been adequately understood regarding how they have supported active interactions. These practices also do not take into account and accommodate factors affecting the feedback process. Researchers have mostly focused on traditional feedback methods, which often involve lecturers giving feedback to students in one direction without involving them in discussion, assessing results, limiting feedback formats to written comments, and ignoring contextual factors and individual differences [17]. Meanwhile, research into the practice of new paradigm feedback has not yet been carried out. Examining feedback in higher education can provide a deeper understanding of how to improve student learning through feedback. Examining feedback practices should include students' views because lecturers' and students' views differ in practice [32], [33]. Therefore, it is important to study feedback practices in higher education from the perspective of students who interact directly with contextual factors.

The study aims to investigate whether feedback practices in higher education have facilitated active student interaction, and how contextual and individual factors are considered. The research was conducted by exploring students' perceptions of feedback practices and what they expect to gain an understanding of how feedback practices are implemented in higher education. The research considers university differences and gender differences, considering each university has a unique culture and environment, and gender differences can influence feedback preferences. The results obtained are expected to provide input for educators on the development of strategies and approaches in feedback practices that are relevant, and effective in enhancing student learning and development in higher education.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

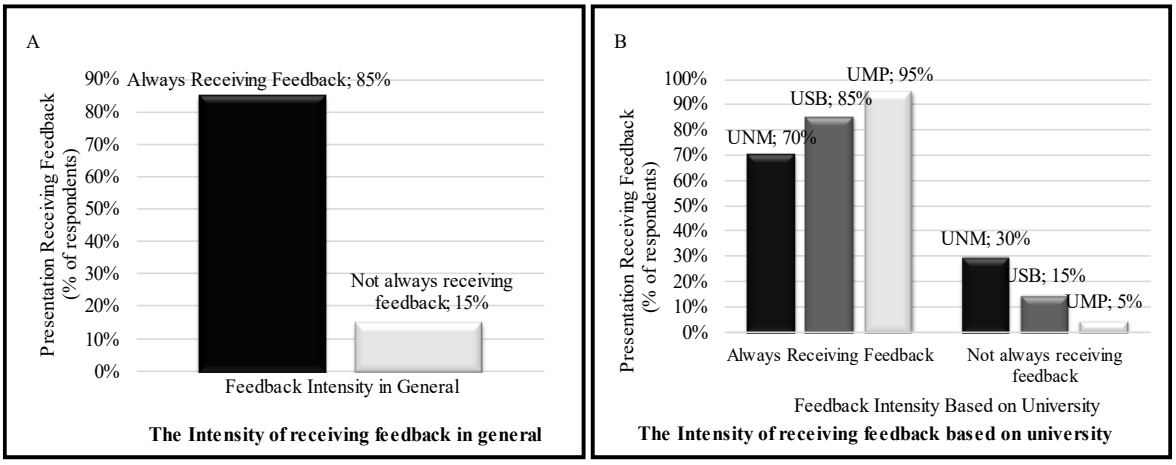
The data collection used a questionnaire from Mulliner and Bohnacker-Bruce [34], [35] which had been modified according to research needs. Validity and reliability tests were conducted before the distribution of the questionnaire instrument. The accuracy, accuracy of information construction, and clarity of words and phrases in each sentence of the instrument were reviewed by six education and teaching experts. The instrument validity was calculated using Aiken's V [36]. It was categorized as valid if it had a minimum Aiken's V of 0.89 due to the use of six experts to validate it. Reliability testing was based on Cronbach's alpha value, where an acceptable score was >0.7 [37]. Based on the results of the validity and reliability test of the instrument, the Aiken value and Cronbach's alpha value were 0.91 and 0.83, respectively. These results indicated that the instrument used was valid and reliable. Furthermore, the questionnaire was distributed via a Google Form to facilitate data collection and interpretation at three universities from Indonesia, namely Universitas Sulawesi Barat (USB), Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM), and Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang (UMP).

Based on the questionnaires collected, the number of students was 418, consisting of 147 students from USB (48 male and 99 female), 157 students from UNM (56 male and 101 female), and 114 students from UMP (45 male and 69 female). All student questionnaire data was used as the research sample. This sample size was considered sufficient, according to Roscoe [38] who stated that the minimum sample size for each category was 30. In this study, the sample size for each category (university and gender) >30 samples were quite representative. Then, the questionnaire results were analyzed descriptively and quantitatively.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The intensity of receiving feedback

The intensity of receiving feedback affects how the feedback is processed by students. Most students agree that they always receive feedback (85%) compared to not always receiving feedback (15%), as shown in Figure 1(a). The data that has been obtained is further analyzed to see differences in the percentage intensity of receiving feedback from the three universities as presented in Figure 1(b). The presentation which was quite high for UMP students showed more frequent intensity, followed by USB and UNM. The higher frequency allows students to have better learning motivation. Besides that, if the feedback is given effectively, it will affect students' ability to process and understand feedback information [39].



(a) (b)

Figure 1. Comparison of students' intensity of receiving feedback in (a) general and (b) university

3.2. Effectiveness and features that should be included in feedback

Positive belief in the role of feedback provides awareness that feedback is constructive. It will avoid being defensive in receiving information or criticism from lecturers [40]. In general, students think that feedback plays an effective role and has an impact on the quality of their work. The majority of students at UMP, USB, and UNM agree that feedback is very effective in influencing work quality as shown in Figure 2(a). There are no significant differences between universities with average percentages of moderately effective and highly effective. This means that differences in universities do not influence students' positive views of feedback on the quality of their work. Based on gender category as presented in Figure 2(b), female students have a more dominant perspective (70%) who stated that feedback is very effective in influencing the quality of their work compared to male students (50%), while the quite effective category is dominated by male students than female students.

In general, feedback is considered very effective in improving the quality of student work based on the university. This can be caused by several factors, such as university cultures that emphasize student-centered learning and facilitate constructive feedback. University policy requires lecturers to provide written feedback to students periodically. The lecturer's approach is to use active learning methods and provide constructive feedback. Having access to adequate university resources to provide quality feedback, and being proactive in seeking feedback and utilizing it. Meanwhile, based on gender, feedback is also very effective in improving the quality of student work, especially for female students. This may be a result of female's need for more specific and constructive feedback to improve their confidence, female learning styles that prefer verbal and non-verbal feedback, and societal stereotypes about female work roles.

Students' opinions about ideal feedback were explored with the question of what feedback features should exist in feedback. UMP and USB students need more specific feedback explaining weaknesses/mistakes (35%), as shown in Figure 2(c). Clear feedback with detailed and actionable instructions help them improve their performance improving the quality of subsequent work. In contrast to UMP and USB students, UNM students apart from wanting specific feedback explaining weaknesses/mistakes (39%), also agree to face-to-face discussions (32%). This illustrates that UNM students need more direct interaction with lecturers to understand feedback and how to apply it in their work to improve the quality of their understanding. The feedback feature based on gender as presented in Figure 2(d)

shows male students prefer face-to-face discussion feedback (31%), which means that males value clear and actionable feedback more, and direct interaction with lecturers. Meanwhile, female students want specific feedback explaining weaknesses (34%). Female students may need more comprehensive and supportive feedback, including praise for their work. The feedback feature is needed by students because it is having the potential to provide effective feedback and increase motivation. Feedback accompanied by detailed instructions will prevent students' intrinsic motivation from decreasing [41].

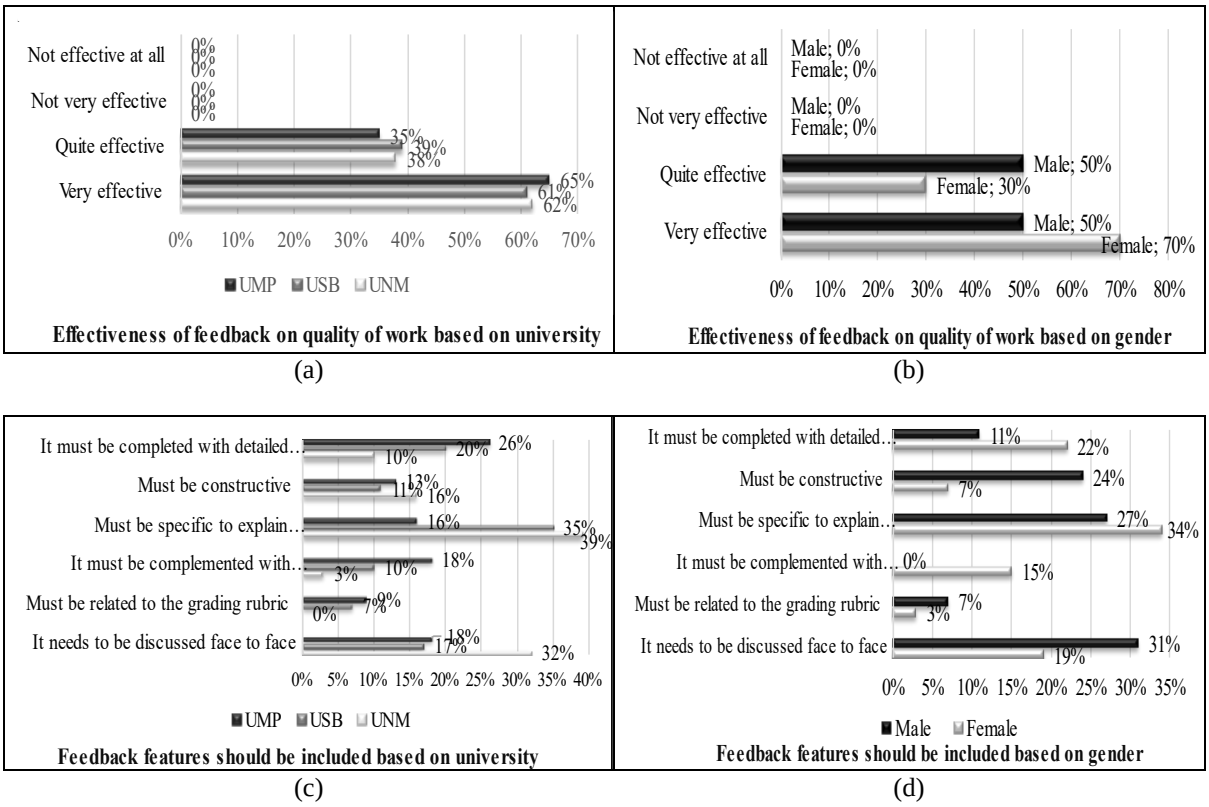
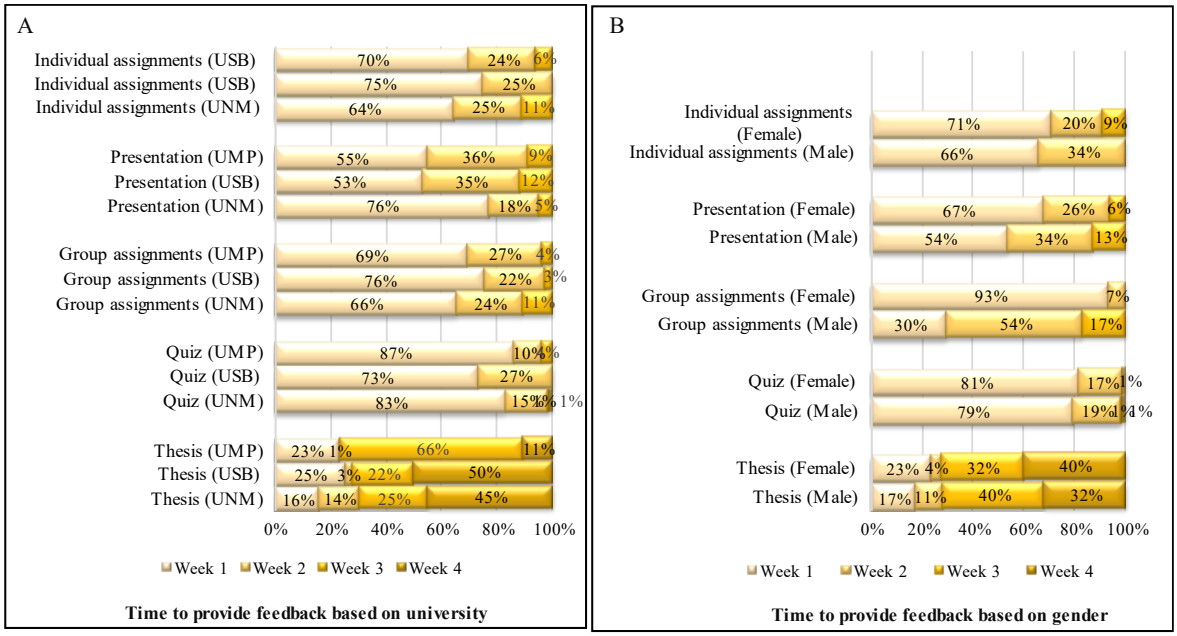


Figure 2. Comparison of the effectiveness should be included in feedback based on (a) university and (b) gender, and features should be included in feedback based on (c) university and (d) gender

3.3. The ideal time to provide feedback

The ideal time of feedback is crucial to explore because research reveals feedback will only be effective if it is given by the expected time [42]. Late feedback is less valuable to students since student have moved on to other work. Figure 3(a) depicts student opinions of the optimal time for feedback on various types of tasks. Each student agrees that individual assignments, presentations, group assignments, and quizzes need feedback within a week. For thesis assignments, USB and UNM students recommend four weeks with respective percentages of 50% and 45%. UMP result was significantly different, students' responses indicated the highest percentage choosing three weeks (66%) compared with students who thought that the thesis should be given feedback within four weeks (11%). Based on these findings, there is a trend in which individual assignments, presentation assignments, group assignments, and quizzes require feedback within five working days, whereas thesis assignments diverge. Student's level can affect their choice of faster feedback. For example, students who are completing a thesis will tend to choose faster feedback.

Differences in views based on gender are shown in Figure 3(b). Male and female students have similarities in choosing the time to give feedback for quizzes, the feedback needs to be given within 1 week (above 70%). Individual and group assignments demonstrate that female students expect feedback within a week (above 70%), but male students expected feedback for group assignments within two weeks (above 50%). Another research that is in line with the results shows that the maximum time students are prepared to receive feedback is two weeks [42]. Unique differences are found in thesis, male students tend to have feedback within 3 weeks (40%), while females are dominated by the opinion that the thesis is given feedback within 4 weeks (40%).



(a) (b)

Figure 3. Comparison of time to provide feedback based on (a) university and (b) gender

3.4. The effectiveness of various types of feedback

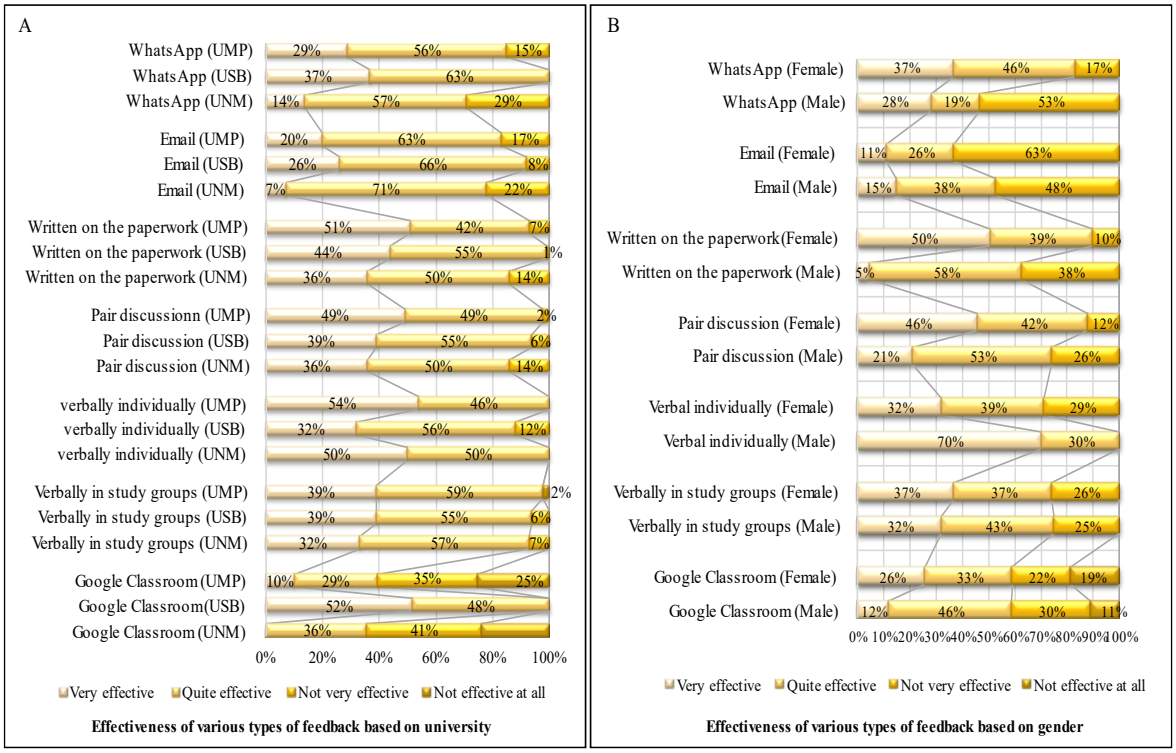
Student opinions on the effectiveness of feedback are explored through questions about how effective certain types of feedback as shown in Figure 4(a). USB students perceive verbal feedback through face-to-face (32%) and email (26%) to be ineffective, while digital feedback through Google Classroom is considered effective (50%). These digital applications provide students with video, audio, and writing feedback. Furthermore, combining video and audio feedback forms is recommended to enhance strategies in feedback practice [43].

In contrast to USB, UMP students thought that feedback through Google Classroom was ineffective (10%) followed by feedback via email (20%), while student perspectives indicated that feedback was most effective when given verbally through face-to-face (54%). The same patterns with UMP, UNM students think verbally individually as the effective feedback (50%) and feedback through email as ineffective feedback (7%). These results are in line with research that shows positive perceptions of students when lecturers communicate feedback verbally [4]. Even though verbal feedback is well received by students, it requires a lot of time [44]. Several factors can influence student perceptions and preferences, such as lecturers' habits, the learning environment, and the culture [45]. The more often lecturers use feedback based on student preferences, the more successful their learning will be [46]. The effectiveness of various types of feedback based on gender was also explored as presented in Figure 4(b). Female students perceive written feedback on the paperwork (89%) and verbal in study groups (74%) as effective compared to other feedback, while male students perceive that verbal individually (100%) is effective feedback. Both male and female believed email feedback was ineffective, whereas verbal feedback showed a favorable response both individually and in groups.

3.5. Feedback currently received

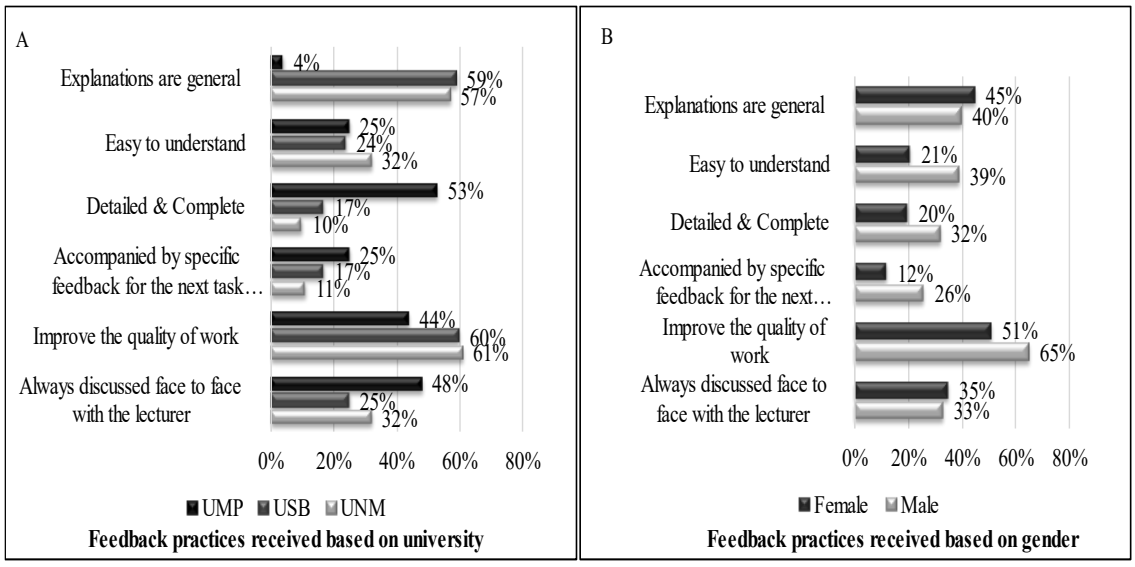
Students were asked to provide their views on the practice of providing feedback by questioning what kind of feedback they were currently receiving. Student responses reveal feedback affects the quality of work to the same extent, but feedback provided by lecturers varies in the results as shown in Figure 5(a). Feedback practices at UMP were dominated by responses that feedback they received was detailed and complete (53%) and always discussed face-to-face with lecturers (48%), while the lowest was feedback in the form of general explanations (4%). Feedback that involves dialogue and is cyclical is the most effective and has a positive influence [47]. USB and UNM show the same tendency where students think feedback improves the quality of work, but they rarely receive detailed or complete explanations. This is shown by the highest response in terms of feedback explanations were general (above 50%) which means implemented frequently, and the lowest response in terms of feedback detailed and complete (below 20%). A gender

analysis showed that more male students (65%) believed that feedback improved their work, and the lowest (26%) was feedback accompanied by specific comments as presented in Figure 5(b). Female students reported feedback helps improve the quality of work (51%) with general explanations (40%), and the lowest for feedback with specific explanations (12%). This means the current practice does not provide clearly defined reasons for improving the quality of both male and female.



(a) (b)

Figure 4. Comparison of the effectiveness various types of feedback based on (a) university and (b) gender



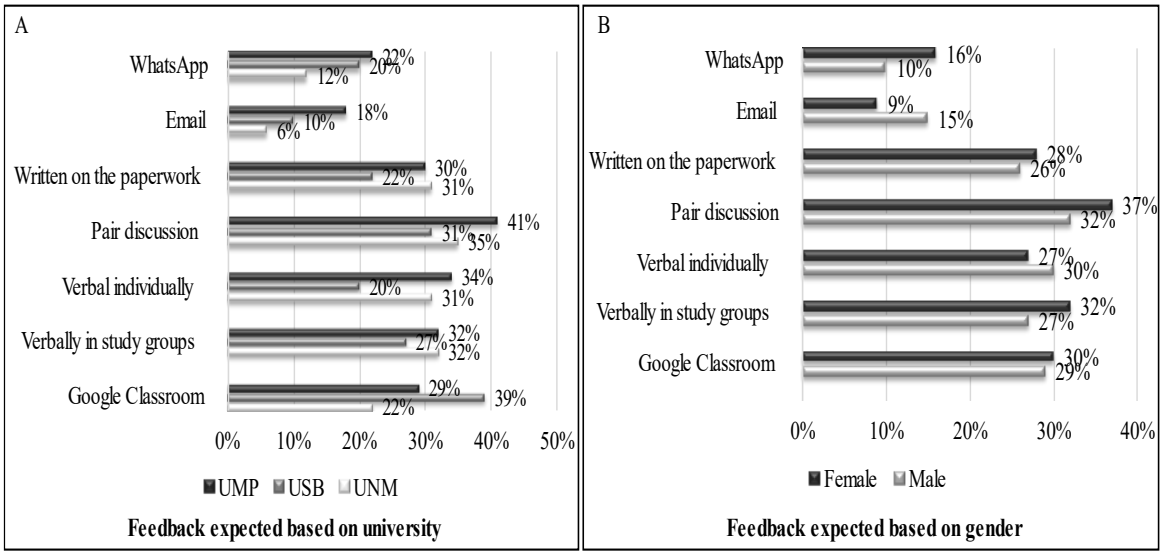
(a) (b)

Figure 5. Comparison of feedback practices received based on (a) university and (b) gender

3.6. Expected feedback

Feedback preferences expected by students based on the university show that UMP and UNM students expect more feedback through discussion in pairs with a percentage of 41% and 35%, respectively, while USB students expect feedback through Google Classroom (60%). These results are presented in Figure 6(a). The difference in preferences based on gender shows females expect feedback through discussion in pairs (37%) followed by verbal feedback in the study group (32%), male students expect feedback through discussion in pairs (32%) and verbal feedback individually (30%), as shown in Figure 6(b).

In general, both in terms of university and gender, students prefer feedback that involves interaction either through individual and group discussions or direct verbal delivery by lecturers. This allows students to verify feedback received and take responsibility [48]. Verbal feedback also encourages students to be more proactive, and attentive and retain the feedback they receive [49]. This means that feedback with such a model tends to be expected from students. Effective feedback requires students to participate in the learning process by acknowledging the value of feedback, comprehending its significance, and acting on it [45]. However, providing feedback through discussions requires a systematic design, including the planning phase, the discussion phase, and the translation of the feedback which involves students [50]. In addition, the use of digital platforms also needs to be considered because it shows a better effect than paper-based [51].



(a) (b)

Figure 6. Comparison of feedback expected based on (a) university and (b) gender

3.7. Strategies for effective feedback implementation

Based on feedback practices at UNM, USB, and UMP and by gender, it was observed feedback practices have not yet fully embraced the latest feedback. An interesting result obtained is that students generally expect feedback that involves active interaction which allows students to confirm the feedback they receive, not just provide information. This is also emphasized in the latest feedback that students are expected to build their understanding from the experience of interacting with educators, peers, and themselves. This is in line with the social constructivist approach [5]. Figure 7 illustrates how feedback is currently conducted, especially at UNM and USB. The practice of feedback is one-way, in which educators give feedback to students who act as passive recipients. Educators provide evaluations and assessments only focusing on the final results. As a result, students receive feedback without having any meaningful interaction.

Figure 8 shows students' expectations to prioritize dynamic and collaborative multi-way interactions. Feedback sources become more diverse, including educators and various sources, while students also actively participate by generating feedback. This process is influenced by two dimensions, the contextual which includes environmental and situational factors, culture [52], and the individual who considers students' characteristics. This practice emphasizes the importance of reciprocal interaction and tailoring feedback based on context and individual needs, creating a more holistic and effective learning experience [53].

Figure 7. The one-way interaction process that dominates current feedback practice

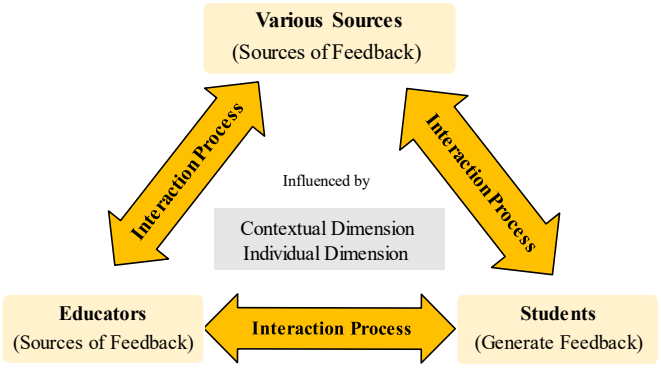


Figure 8. The expected multi-way interaction process in feedback practice

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis results, students generally have received feedback from lecturers (85%) and realize that feedback is effective in improving their learning outcomes. However, the feedback currently received does not fully facilitate active interaction and dialogue as emphasized in the new paradigm. Thus, feedback practices should be reoriented to align with the latest feedback paradigm. This is shown in the feedback practices received at UNM and USB which are dominated by feedback in the form of general explanations. This is different from UMP which has received detailed, complete feedback and is always discussed. The results indicate that feedback can be more effective if it is discussed directly (above 50%) and if it uses technology-supporting images, videos, and writing. Students expect feedback to include the exchange of information between individuals and groups rather than general information. Additionally, feedback should feature detailed explanations, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses, and be given at an appropriate time.

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