

Ethnocultural Empathy Level: A Study Case in Counseling Students

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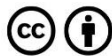
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ABSTRACT: Ethnocultural empathy is essential for a counselor to understand the client's condition. Mutual respect and realizing the difference are essential for relating to others in a multicultural environment. However, in the present, empathy cannot be obtained easily but should be devised. This research examines the level of ethnocultural emphasis on the teacher's students' Guidance and counseling. This study is descriptive quantitative research, data collecting using the instrument The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy with 31 questions. Instrument validity refers to the Corrected Item score, Total Correlation $\geq .300$ with a Cronbach's Alpha score 721. The sample involved prospective students of guidance and counseling teachers, with as many as 213 respondents. Descriptive statistics are used to interpret and explain the numerical data presented. In addition, to encourage respondents to participate in this research, an online instrument was created with a time-based fee structure, which made the implementation process more efficient. With an analysis of ethnocultural empathy levels in prospective school counselors based on gender and ethnicity, this study identified that prospective school counselors have ethnocultural empathy levels based on gender and ethnicity that exist in four dimensions, namely at the average level. Therefore, the university must be able to pay special attention to the cultivation of ethnocultural empathy for prospective teacher guidance and counseling students.

INTRODUCTION

The ethnocultural diversity among students in educational settings presents many challenges that can impact their academic success and overall well-being. Students from immigrant backgrounds, refugees, and ethnic minorities often face unique obstacles that can affect their educational experiences. Factors such as acculturation, identification, language proficiency, and cultural competence play crucial roles in shaping the educational trajectories of these students (Kim et al., 2015).

One of the ethnocultural problems faced by guidance and counseling students is the low level of ethnocultural empathy (Egitim & Akaliyski, 2024). This is shown through the assessment of the ethnocultural empathy scale, which shows that most students are in the low category. This low level of ethnocultural empathy can impact students' ability to interact and communicate effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, intervention is needed to improve

students' ethnocultural empathy skills, one of which is through transactional analysis group counseling (Lorie et al., 2017).

Acculturation, as highlighted by Schaefer & Simon (2016), refers to the process through which individuals from different cultural backgrounds adapt to the norms and values of the dominant culture. This process can be particularly challenging for immigrant students who may need help to balance their heritage culture with the expectations of the host society. Additionally, the study by Canisius & Collins (2022) emphasizes how the educational pathways of Canadian youth from immigrant backgrounds are influenced by factors such as equality and ethnic hierarchy, shedding light on the complexities of navigating educational systems as individuals from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds.

Another ethnocultural problem is that students need more cultural diversity awareness and understanding. The FGD (Forum Group Discussion) results show that many students still think stereotypes are more accurate and truthful than prejudice. This shows that students still need to understand cultural diversity and how it affects social interactions. Therefore, it is essential to integrate cultural diversity education in guidance and counseling programs to increase student's awareness and understanding of ethnocultural empathy (Rasoal et al., 2009).

Language proficiency is another critical aspect that impacts students' academic trajectories, especially English language learners. Vaughn et al. (2017) discuss how not all language-minority students have the same trajectory for school success, indicating that varying levels of language proficiency can influence academic outcomes. This is further supported by Garnett (2010), who highlights how background factors such as English proficiency can affect different ethnocultural groups differently, underscoring the importance of providing tailored support for students with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Moreover, the experiences of refugee youth, as explored by Brough et al. (2016), reveal the intersection of past traumas with current stressors, emphasizing the need for trauma-informed support systems within educational institutions. Understanding the mental health challenges faced by refugee students is crucial in creating inclusive and supportive learning environments that cater to their unique needs (Block et al., 2014).

Cultural competence among educators and healthcare professionals is essential in addressing the needs of ethnoculturally diverse student populations. Lai et al. (2023) discuss how healthcare professionals' receptivity to cultural competence training can impact the quality of care provided to diverse groups, highlighting the importance of fostering cultural competence within educational and healthcare settings (Caravan, 2009).

The ethnocultural challenges students face encompass many factors that can influence their academic journey and overall well-being (Mähönen & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2012). By recognizing the complexities of acculturation, language proficiency, trauma-informed care, and cultural competence, educational institutions can better support students from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds in achieving their academic goals and thriving in their learning environments.

Efforts should be made to increase ethnocultural empathy in prospective school counselors. Ethnocultural empathy, in this case, is the process of acceptance of the participant's required skills in accepting the self-counseling without distinguishing from where the client comes from and fully understanding what is felt by the client; the condition can be interpreted as ethnocultural empathy/empathy ethnic-culture (Wang et al., 2003).

However, to increase the level of ethnocultural empathy in prospective students, guidance and counseling teachers need to be researched the level of ethnocultural empathy in students of prospective teachers BK by using adoption instruments under the instrument name The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (Wang et al., 2003). Based on the background of the problems presented, it

is expected that the results of this study from the data obtained become benchmarks for future research to increase the ethnocultural empathy of prospective school counselors. Furthermore, the results of this study can be a reference for learning to increase the level of ethnocultural empathy in the world of education. They can reduce the number of adverse events caused by low levels of ethnocultural empathy.

METHODS

Design

The design of this study is descriptive quantitative. This study aims to provide an overview of ethnocultural empathy from prospective teacher guidance and counseling students whose data is obtained quantitatively from the ethnocultural empathy scale.

Population and Sample

The study involved 213 prospective Uhamka guidance and counseling students, with details of 36 samples of the male sex and 177 samples of the female sex.

Data Collection Tools

The instrument used in this study is The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy ([Wang et al., 2003](#)), with a total of 31 statements. Furthermore, in the instrument, four dimensions represent all the details of the statement in this research. Instrument validity refers to the Corrected Item score-Total Correlation $\geq .300$ with a Cronbach's Alpha score 721. In this study, data was collected through online research instruments sent to respondents with a specified deadline for response. Before completing the instrument, respondents were informed of the research purpose, both in writing on the initial page of the instrument and in a verbal explanation.

Data Analysis

The analysis is done using descriptive statistics through score items. Respondents obtained scores when they answered questions on the ethnocultural empathy scale. The data used is average to determine the level of ethnocultural empathy for prospective teacher guidance and counseling. Then, the existing data is interpreted based on the categories that have been created.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Ethnocultural empathy scale

The descriptive analysis presented in Table 1 illustrates the ethnocultural empathy scale's statistical description, encompassing the dimensions of Feeling and Expression of Empathy, Taking Empathic Perspective, Acceptance of Cultural Differences, and Awareness of Empathy. The data collected from 213 respondents reveals a range of scores from the minimum to the maximum across these dimensions, reflecting varying degrees of empathetic responses among prospective teacher guidance and counseling students. The mean scores indicate a moderate level of empathy, with room for improvement, particularly in the dimension of Acceptance of Cultural Differences, where the average score stands at 2.2535, highlighting a potential area for intervention and enhancement in cultural empathy training programs. The following is the result of descriptive analysis in Table 1.

Table 1. Statistical description of the ethnocultural empathy scale

Statistic	Feeling and Expression of Empathy	Taking Empathic Perspective	Acceptance of Cultural Differences	Awareness of Empathy
N	213	213	213	213
Minimum	2	2	1	1
Maximum	5	5	4	5
Mean	3.6901	3.2394	2.2535	3.8545
Standard Deviation	.49311	.50837	.84761	.71536
Kurtosis	-0.552	.252	-0.753	.683
Standard Error	.332	.332	.332	.332

Table 1 shows that the average ethnocultural empathy value of prospective teacher guidance and counseling students on the dimension of feelings and expressions of empathy from the minimum value of 2 and the maximum value of 5 is 3.6901. the empathy perspective retrieval dimension of the minimum value of 2 and the maximum value of 5 is 3.2394. the dimension of acceptance of cultural differences from the value of minimum one and the maximum value of 4 is 2.2535. then, in the empathy awareness dimension th, the minimum value of 1 and the maximum value of 5 is 3. This shows the results of descriptive analysis on each dimension of ethnocultural empathy based on Table 1; it is stated that the average score most needs to be improved in the dimension of cultural acceptance with a score of 2.25 and 3 other dimensions entered into the category enough with an average score around the number 3.

Ethnocultural Empathy Based on Ethnicity and Gender

The study results indicate differences in the mean scores of ethnocultural empathy between genders across various ethnic groups. For instance, among the Minangkabau and Malay ethnicities, females recorded higher average scores than males, which may signify the role of gender in emotional expression and interpersonal understanding. Conversely, for the Acehnese, Batak, and Bugis ethnicities, males demonstrated higher scores, suggesting the presence of social or cultural factors that influence how ethnocultural empathy is manifested.

The Feeling and Expressing Empathy dimension refers to an individual's capacity to emotionally respond to others' circumstances, whereas Sundanese females exhibited higher abilities. This indicates that cultural aspects and gender socialization can influence how empathy is internalized and expressed. Regarding the Empathic Perspective-Taking aspect, which underlines the cognitive ability to understand others' experiences, specific social values or educational systems among the Javanese may support the development of this facet, reflected in relatively high scores for both genders.

When evaluating the Acceptance of Cultural Differences, which gauges attitudes toward cultural diversity, it was found that some ethnicities scored relatively low. This may indicate a need for more focused multicultural education interventions to enhance understanding and appreciation of diversity. Empathic Awareness, highlighting mindfulness of diversity and differences, appears higher among Betawi females. This could reflect socialization leading to greater sensitivity towards cultural dynamics.

The analysis of standard deviations provides additional insight into the distribution of respondents' scores. Low standard deviations indicate homogeneity in responses, while higher ones suggest wider variation. From a gender perspective, males exhibit slightly higher mean ethnocultural empathy scores than females across most ethnic groups. However, females have higher mean scores in some ethnicities like Minangkabau, Malay, and Sundanese. This affirms that gender social constructs play a role in shaping how ethnocultural empathy is manifested and experienced.

Table 2. Ethnocultural Empathy degree by tribe

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	Sig.
Feeling and Expression of Empathy * Ethnicity	Between Groups	3.637	10	.364	1.534	0.129
	Within Groups	47.912	202	.237		
	Total	51.549	212			
Taking Empathy Perspective * Ethnicity	Between Groups	3.498	10	.350	1.378	.193
	Within Groups	51.291	202	.254		
	Total	54.789	212			
Acceptance of Cultural Differences * Ethnicity	Between Groups	4.875	10	.488	.668	.753
	Within Groups	147.435	202	.730		
	Total	152.310	212			
Awareness of Empathy * Ethnicity	Between Groups	6.791	10	.679	1.349	.207
	Within Groups	101.697	202	.503		
	Total	108.488	212			

This collected data is invaluable in assisting counselors, educators, and practitioners in identifying patterns of ethnocultural empathy. With this understanding, targeted programs can strengthen social harmony and intercultural understanding, ultimately enhancing social cohesion and cross-cultural cooperation within this pluralistic society.

Ethnocultural Empathy Degree by Tribe

Examining ethnocultural empathy levels across various tribes reveals intriguing insights into the interplay between cultural backgrounds and empathetic tendencies. Table 2 presents the statistical analysis of ethnocultural empathy across different tribes, including Aceh, Minangkabau, Batak, Malay, Palembang, Ambon, Java, Sunda, Betawi, Bugis, and other blended tribal identities. The results suggest that while there are variations in empathetic responses across tribes, these differences do not significantly impact the overall ethnocultural empathy scores among prospective teacher guidance and counseling students. Despite the slight variations, the average scores for each dimension of ethnocultural empathy remain above 0.3, indicating a moderate to high level of empathy across the board. Interestingly, male individuals from the Minangkabau tribe exhibit exceptionally high scores, scoring 4.500 in the Feeling and Expression of Empathy dimension. This suggests potential cultural nuances that influence empathetic behaviors, warranting further exploration and consideration in cultural empathy training programs.

It is described that ethnocultural empathy levels are based on ethnicity and gender. The diversity of existing tribes includes, aceh, minangkabau, batak, malay, palembang, ambon, java, sunda, betawi, bugis, as well as a fusion of other tribes. The results showed that the ethnocultural empathy average value of prospective teacher guidance and counseling students was in a sufficient category where each dimension was at an average position of 0.3 and above, where the dimensions of feelings and expressions of empathy are at an average value of 0.364. At the same time, the empathy perspective-taking dimension averages 0.350. Then, the dimensions of cultural differences were at an average of 0.488. Moreover, the empathic dimension of consciousness has an average of 0.675. Then, the male sex in the Minangkabau tribe found a high average score of 4,500 in the dimensions of feeling and empathy perspective.

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis and findings of the study results, it was stated that ethnocultural empathy in male students was higher than in female students. In general, female students' ethnocultural empathy is higher than male students. Research conducted by [Macaskill et al. \(2002\)](#) showed that

women's score scores were higher than men's. However, this is different from the results of the study conducted, where the ethnocultural empathy score of male students was higher than that of women. The results of this study are almost in line with the opinion of [Santrock \(2007\)](#), who stated that the tendency of male nature is more practical, interested in diversity and routine, meticulous, disciplined, friendly, humorous, affectionate, rude, trustworthy, helpful, calmer, have a sense of security, be satisfied with one's abilities, temper and like to get along.

Then, with regards to the tribe, the assumption is that the Betawi tribe (who live in a big city) has a high level of ethnocultural empathy because the tribe is in a big city and is very likely to interact a lot with other tribes that exist. However, based on the results of the study, it was found that the Minangkabau tribe had a score of 4.500 on the dimension of empathic feelings. This is in line with the proverb used by the minangkabaua tribe, namely "Dima Bumi Dipijak, in Sinan Langik Dijunjuang." This means how the Minangkabau tribe can adjust to the local community. From this, we can mean that the Minangkabau tribe can adjust to an environment that may differ from its culture ([Patterson, 2004](#)).

The results of an analysis of 31 items of the ethnocultural empathy scale are used to measure the ability of prospective teacher guidance and counseling students' ability to understand cultural differences and adapt to different cultural or cross-cultural environments or situations. Ethnocultural empathy consists of four dimensions, empathy feelings and expressions, empathy perspective-taking, acceptance of cultural differences, and empathy awareness ([Wang et al., 2003](#)).

Empathy becomes a part of a personal relationship of paramount concern, where empathy is generally a condition where one feels what is inside others ([Wang et al., 2003](#)). [Baron & Byrne \(2005\)](#), empathy is the ability to feel the emotional state of others, feel sympathetic, try to solve problems, and take the perspective of others. For prospective students of Guidance and counseling, empathy is an ability that must be possessed to understand their perspective. Empathy counseling has a vital role in counseling services ([Mapiare, 2006](#); [McLeod, 2011](#)), where counselors are required to have the ability to enter the client's perspective. Therefore, the success of the counseling process is not determined only by the counselor's cognitive skills but rather by empathy and how the characteristics of the counselor are key ([Corey, 2009](#)).

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis tables, the ability and understanding of prospective teachers to guide and counsel students in adapting to other different cultures and in the new cultural environment is sufficient. As prospective students, Guidance and counseling teachers already have sufficient ethnocultural empathy, which needs to be improved so that in learning and daily health, they can appreciate each other's cultural differences. Therefore, training and guidance services are needed to improve the ethnocultural empathy of prospective BK teachers ([Gustini, 2017](#)).

Exploring ethnocultural empathy among diverse ethnic groups reveals critical insights for educators, school counselors, educational practitioners, students, and researchers ([Putri, 2016](#)). Such empathy is pivotal, particularly for school counselor candidates uniquely positioned to foster understanding and respect for cultural differences within the school environment. This research provides reflective material and a foundation for developing programs to enhance ethnocultural empathy among students, especially those in school counseling programs ([Hogan, 2013](#)). Students must acquire skills to respect and appreciate cultural diversity.

This study, however, encounters limitations in measuring levels of ethnocultural empathy about gender and ethnicity. Future research endeavors should expand upon these findings, drawing from a broader range of sources to obtain a more nuanced understanding of these complexities. Further investigation is necessary, incorporating interviews to ascertain student characteristics that

could provide deeper insights into their comprehension, knowledge, and capabilities in applying measurable ethnocultural empathy (Triyono, 2005).

In the future, studies should involve conducting in-depth interviews to evaluate student characteristics to understand better how well students comprehend, know, and measurably apply ethnocultural empathy. Moreover, further research is necessary to explore different models or strategies of guidance and counseling services that could enhance ethnocultural empathy in prospective school counseling students. This study highlights the importance of ethnocultural empathy for future school counselors and provides a current overview of ethnocultural empathy levels among students. The implications, limitations, and avenues for future research identified herein can assist in improving understanding and competencies related to ethnocultural empathy among future school counselors.

Implications

This research can be a material of reflection and development for educators, lecturers, school counselors, education practitioners, students, and researchers to develop ethnocultural empathy like prospective students of guidance and counseling teachers through guidance and counseling programs in institutions where they work. For this reason, students are expected to have the competencies and skills to understand existing cultural differences.

Limitation of the Study

This study has certain limitations when measuring ethnocultural empathy rates about gender and ethnicity. In order to enhance its accuracy, future research should refer to multiple interrelated sources. It is imperative to incorporate comprehensive literature on counseling and guidance strategies for improving ethnocultural empathy among aspiring teacher guidance and counseling students. Subsequently, further exploration can be conducted using interviews to evaluate the attributes of students, which can provide measurable data about their understanding, knowledge, and ability to apply ethnocultural empathy.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study conclude that the ethnocultural empathy possessed by prospective Guidance and counseling teacher students is, on average, sufficient. The dimensions of ethnocultural empathy consist of four: empathic expression and feeling, Empathic Perspective Retrieval—from other people/groups, Acceptance of Cultural Differences, and Empathy Awareness. This shows that prospective students of guidance and counseling teachers have a strong desire to improve multicultural competence by having the awareness to learn and motivate themselves well.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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