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Cultural Intelligence and Ethnocultural Empathy Among Psychology Students in Serbia: Insights and Perspectives Abstract

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Abstract: Cultural intelligence is of great importance for effective communication between members of different cultures, but also for the possibility of better adaptation to other cultural environments. Ethnocultural empathy is necessary to better understand the emotions and needs of members of other cultures. Ethnocultural empathy also involves the understanding and effectively communicating with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This study aimed to assess the intercultural competencies of psychology students in terms of cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy. The Cultural Intelligence Scale, with 20 items, and the Ethnocultural Empathy Scale, with 30 items, was used for data collection. As such, participants completed questionnaires that included basic socio-demographic questions and questions corresponding to each item on the scale. The questionnaires were completed in both online and printed form. The sample included 100 psychology students from various universities in Serbia. A detailed statistical analysis was conducted in order to

detect all results elements of importance. A significant correlation was detected between cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy. Dimensions of cultural intelligence through which the correlation was manifested were shown to be metacognitive and motivational one. Determination of cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy by intercultural competencies were examined. The study demonstrates that proficiency in communicating in other languages is the primary factor predicting both ethnocultural empathy and the influence of exposure to different cultures. The effect of experiencing other cultures on ethnocultural empathy may be partially influenced by one's ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages. This study offered a fresh perspective on a previously researched topic, considering the impact of changing contexts and social structures on its outcomes. It provided insights into how these changes have influenced the subject on a global scale. Practical changes in educational approaches indicated by this study results are needed to help psychology students become more culturally aware and empathetic, which impacts overall cultural diversity development.

Keywords: intercultural competencies, cultural intelligence, ethnocultural empathy, psychology students, education.

Introduction

Research on cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy has been limited in scope, with only a small number of papers authored by a select few individuals, many of which were published several years ago (Gladstein, 1977; Green, 1995; Letourneau, 1981; Litvack-Miller et al., 1997; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Sternberg, 1985; Wang et al., 2003). A lot of the results and theories presented in these papers are well-known and significant, but the data they rely on is outdated. It's crucial that research is updated to reflect current trends and contexts, particularly in light of increasing rates of mass migration. It's essential that every psychological and sociological concept is examined with a focus on the multicultural nature of society. Therefore, this research aimed to address this issue by detecting the potential relationship between cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy and to find good predictors of both.

Psychologists, as important factors of social functionality being maintained, were primary sample of this research. Since new constructs are to be developed and learned, students are better option than graduates (Kapıkıran, 2023; Tittler et al., 2022). Additionally, it was shown that educational, institutional intervention significantly improved the research variables (Grosch et al., 2023), so this research can determine the best practice to insure such intervention.

When it comes to cultural intelligence, most researchers come back to its well-known four dimensions. The issue of this approach validity in current trends and society was raised and this division was changed by creating additional subscales of existing dimensions (Van Dyne et al., 2012). Introduced changes reflect on educational institutional interventions that are becoming imperative in human resources policies (Sutherland et al., 2015; Yesufu, 2021). Intercultural competencies are viewed as crucial components in enhancing working performance and promoting effective communication, etc. (Sutherland et al., 2015).

For ethnocultural empathy the similar holds. Namely, many researches often refer to Wang et al. (2003), use their definition and understanding of the topic, four components of ethnocultural empathy they detected and adjust new results towards new topics that can relate to ethnocultural empathy without re-evaluating its understanding via perspectives and insights emerging from new context, social structure, increased communication possibilities, recently ended or still lasting allegedly culturally

motivated conflicts, tourism expansion etc. (Egitim & Akaliyski, 2024; Sharifi-Tehrani et al., 2019; Li et al., 2018).

The present research delved into perspectives and insights of raised issues.

A valuable contribution of this paper is manifested by addressing cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy through psychology students' education, which offers a sustainable solution that can positively impact individuals, organisations, and communities in the long term (Lee & Khawaja, 2012; Rasoal et al., 2009). Selective or outdated results in related researches indicate necessity for continuation and additional development (Livermore et al., 2022). Research in Serbia on cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy is rather poor and often deals with conflict consequences resolutions, which have shown to be necessary, rather than cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy (Li et al., 2018; Spanovic et al., 2010). Also, research often does not treat only Serbia, but is rather of comparative type (Genkova et al., 2022).

The main purpose of the study focused on the relationship between cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy, its detailed specification, determination of predictability of both via intercultural competencies variables, and emphasising significant predictors with elaboration on prediction model characteristics.

The aim of the research was to find significant relationship and to determine which CQ dimensions contribute to it the most. Also, the study aimed to point out which intercultural competencies should be addressed the most to develop cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy. The consequential reflection of manifested models was to be addressed as well.

The research can indicate on better methods of cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy development by educational interventions, especially at psychology students, and to provide more evidence for the need for further research on such interventions at both individual and institutional levels. Additional possibilities for future research will be as well indicated by the obtained results.

Literature Review

The importance of cultural intelligence and concerned research are indicated by many authors (Ang et al., 2006; Sternberg et al., 2022). Most commonly, it is referred to as one's ability to adjust and thrive in situations where one is faced with challenges stemming from interactions with individuals or customs from different cultures (Sternberg et al., 2021).

Note that when general intelligence is considered, different definitions have been suggested. As a result, the field of intelligence research has introduced several new types of intelligence, such as ecological intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and logical-mathematical intelligence (Sternberg, 2020). Cultural intelligence stands out as a special type of intelligence, which finds its foothold in Sternberg's theory of intelligence (Sternberg, 1985), which precisely emphasises the multidimensionality of intelligence and its action in a real-life context (Earley & Ang, 2003).

In another definition (Thomas et al., 2008, p. 127), cultural intelligence is defined as "an interactive system of knowledge and skills, connected by cultural metacognition, which enables adaptation, selection or change of cultural aspects of the environment".

According to Earley and Ang (2003), cultural intelligence is a multidimensional construct comprising metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions. The metacognitive component reflects mental processes that individuals use to acquire and understand cultural knowledge. The cognitive component reflects knowledge of the norms, practices and conventions in

different cultures acquired from education and personal experience. The motivational component reflects the capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences. The behavioural component reflects the capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures.

Different definitions of empathy are being employed (Hall et al., 2021). In philosophy, empathy is described (Eklund, 2011) as the ability to understand another person, as caring for another person. Empathy is invaluable for everyday social interaction. Many researchers (Rasoal et al., 2011) emphasise its importance in both informal and professional contexts. It has been shown (Litvack-Miller et al., 1997) that empathy can have the effect of reducing hostile attitudes towards certain groups, for example, it can improve relations between ethnic groups. Also, Davis (1996) linked a lack of empathy and aggressive behaviour, as well as hostility towards ethnic groups (Stephan & Finlay, 1999) and homosexuals (Johnson et al., 1997). A connection with child abuse was also found (Letourneau, 1981).

Ethnocultural empathy is usually referred to as understanding of other ethnicity or culture individuals' feelings, and as such has been recognised as an important education and health care factor (Moffit et al., 2022; Rasoal et al., 2009). It is important to differentiate ethnocultural empathy from one's ability to adjust behavioural and emotional response when encountered with other culture or ethnicity individuals, as it has previously been misunderstood (Gladstein, 1977).

Ethnocultural empathy, a unique form of empathy, refers to "the ability to understand and share the emotions of individuals from a different ethnocultural background by seeing things from their cultural perspective. In addition, it also refers to a person's emotional response to the display of feelings by a person from another ethnocultural group (Wang et al., 2003, p. 222). Ethnocultural empathy can also be defined (Rasoal et al., 2011) as "feeling, understanding and caring about what someone from another culture feels, understands and cares about."

According to Wang et al. (2003), ethnocultural empathy has four components: a) Intellectual empathy is the ability to understand how a person with a different ethnic background feels or thinks (Empathic Perspective Taking, EPT); b) Communicative empathy focuses on the verbal expression of ethnocultural empathic thoughts and feelings toward members of other ethnic groups (Empathic Feeling and Expressions, EFE); c) Ethnocultural empathy consciousness is the awareness of how media, society, and the job market impact the treatment of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. (Empathic Awareness, EA) and d) Acceptance of cultural differences is concerned with accepting why people of other ethnic groups behave as they do, for example speaking their own language or wearing traditional clothing (Acceptance of Cultural Differences, AC).

It is also important to know that institutional interventions make significant factor in determining cultural intelligence. Namely, it has been shown that even though students work in intercultural experience related companies, the ones that have passed courses related to cross-cultural management displayed significantly larger cultural intelligence scores (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Additionally, some results indicate that intercultural experience correlates positively only with cultural intelligence motivational dimension. Other dimensions are rather increased only after educational institutional interventions (Grosch et al., 2023).

The importance of institutional intervention, especially the educational one, is shown for ethnocultural empathy (Cacciattolo & Aronson, 2023; Kapıkıran, 2023; Lu et al., 2020). In certain studies, it has been demonstrated that targeted educational interventions, focusing on specific types of trainings and teaching methods, can greatly enhance ethnocultural empathy (Egitim & Akaliyski, 2024; Kim & Tausen, 2022; Moffit et al., 2022). The importance of ethnocultural empathy research and

improvement at psychology and education students is also emphasised (Kapıkıran, 2023; Tittler et al., 2022).

The connection between ethnocultural empathy and the multicultural school context was also investigated (Chang & Le, 2010; Egitim & Akaliyski, 2024; Le et al., 2009; Rivera, 2014). The results showed that ethnocultural empathy is a significant mediator of school support for multiculturalism for academic achievement, but also for the experience of personal happiness. Another research (Pettigrew & Trop, 2008) shows that empathy and flexibility in taking different perspectives (which includes ethnocultural empathy) can mediate the link between intercultural contacts at school and prejudice. Recently, though mediation is treated in detecting latent effects of ethnocultural empathy (Tittler et al., 2022), such an approach is still neglected. However, there are still rather few researches that dealt with intercultural competencies and linked them with ethnocultural empathy.

The importance of this research is reflected in the fact that it examines the intercultural competencies of psychology students, and brings them into relation with ethnocultural empathy. Since there are rather few researches delving with this relationship (Dyche & Zajac, 2001; Green, 1995), this study has the potential to enhance understanding and could lay the groundwork for further research exploring related concepts. Also, this study was aimed to examine the intercultural competencies of student of psychology in terms of impact on cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy.

Materials and Methods

Sample

There were 100 participants in the sample. The sample included psychology students from various universities across Serbia in order to accurately reflect the population of all psychology students in the country.

Psychologists were primary sample of this research due to their importance in determining cultural diversity status in society that is directly impacted by cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy. Since new constructs are to be developed and learned, students are better option than graduates. Moreover, educational institutions play a crucial role in facilitating the necessary development. As such, this research seeks to pinpoint optimal strategies for implementing effective interventions.

Most students were from the State University in Novi Pazar (62). Then, from the Faculty of Science and Mathematics at the University of Kragujevac (19), the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Niš (15), and the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade (4). Participants' age ranged from 18 to 26 years ($M=20.67$, $SD=1.4$). The most respondents are from the third year of study, namely (37%), and the least from the second year, namely (15%). About quarter of the participants are from first (26%) and fourth (22%) year. Majority of participants (95%) reported medium level of SES, and only 5% reported high level.

Students from the State University of Novi Pazar completed a physical copy of the questionnaires, while other participants opted for the online version.

The majority of the respondents grew up in monocultural environment (88%) and are currently living (73%) in a monocultural environment. About one quarter of respondents (26%) stated that they had a lot of experience in interaction with people from other cultures. Most of the respondent communicates moderately in a foreign language: 7% on a daily basis, while 25% of respondent communicate only in their native tongue. About one third of participants (32%) had more than five close friends of other ethnic or religious backgrounds than their own or had none (30%).

Instruments

The instruments used in the research were the Cultural Intelligence Scale (Van Dyne et al., 2009) and the Ethnocultural Empathy Scale (Wang et al., 2003). The scale of Cultural Intelligence consisted of 20 items (some of the items: "I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures", "I know the marriage systems of other cultures"), and the scale of Ethnocultural Empathy consisted of 30 items (for example, several items of this scale: "It is easy for me to understand what it would feel like to be a person of another racial or ethnic background other than my own"; "I feel supportive of people of other racial and ethnic groups, if I think they are being taken advantage of"). From the demographic variables, the variables "Gender", "Age", "Material status" and "Year of study" were used. Students from the State University in Novi Pazar filled out questionnaires in a printed version, and students from other universities had an electronic version of the questionnaire (Google questionnaires). After reading the item, respondents were asked to circle a number from 1 to 5 on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 means "I do not agree at all", 2 means "I mostly disagree", 3 means "Neither agree nor disagree", 4 means "I mostly agree" and 5 means "I completely agree".

Before the very beginning, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the research, and that the data that will be collected in the research were completely anonymous, and that they can give up filling in the questionnaire at any time.

Data Analysis

In order to extract findings from the research, various statistical analysis methods are utilised. Basic descriptive statistics and frequency analysis was performed for sample description relative to the variables of interest. Descriptive statistics were also performed for cultural intelligence dimension variables and ethnocultural empathy score. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was applied and it was elaborated on why parametric methods are applicable in certain cases. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability of thus obtained scores. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to detect the correlation between dimensions of cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy. Also, the correlation of both cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy with intercultural competencies was addressed, along with partial correlation with adequately chosen controlling variable. To determine the impact intercultural competencies have on cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy, multivariate linear regression analysis was performed. Additionally, where needed, mediation analysis was used along with Aroian test to that informed about the observed significance of occurring mediation.

Results

This study provided an overview of the descriptive statistics for intercultural experience variables, as well as cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy, based on data collected from students. Following this, the subsequent sections delved into the remaining research findings and explore their implications.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistical Measures in Relation to the Applied Instruments*

	M	SD	Min	Max	α^*	KS (p)*
CQS Metacognitive	14.41	2.63	4	19	.66	.118 (.01)
CQS Cognitive	19.13	4.20	6	28	.77	.112 (.01)
CQS Motivational	20.09	3.23	10	25	.70	.091 (.01)
CQS Biheviior	15.31	4.65	5	25	.77	.119 (.01)
CQS Global score	70.54	10.09	43	89	.81	.109 (.01)
Ethnocultural empathy	119.68	13.65	81	144	.83	.069 (.01)

The applied instruments had metric characteristics. Namely, metacognitive, cognitive and motivational scale yield reliable measurement, whilst the measurement provided by behavioural component and entire scale of cultural intelligence is very reliable. However, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests showed significant statistics indicating that the distribution of scores on all scales and subscales deviated from normal distribution (Table 1). Due to sample size larger than 30, using parametric methods gave good results despite the distribution was not normal (Sejfović et al., 2023).

The correlations between the cultural intelligence subscales and ethnocultural empathy scale are shown in Table 2.

Table 2*The Relationship Between Cultural Intelligence Scale and Ethnocultural Empathy Scale*

	ISS Metacognitive	CQS Cognitive	CQS Motivational	CQS Biheviior	CQS Global score
Ethnocultural empathy	r 0.299**	0.193	0.332**	0.193	0.353**

Note. r –Pearson’s correlation coefficient; *p < .05, **p < .01

The correlation between ethnocultural empathy and cultural intelligence is shown to be moderate positive correlation significant with the level of significance of 0.01 (r=0.353, p<0.01).

When considering the elements of cultural intelligence, there was a notable correlation between the metacognitive and motivational components and ethnocultural empathy. This correlation was moderate and indicates a significant relationship with very strong evidence (r=0.299 and r=0.332, respectively, p<0.01). There was no evidence that cognitive and behavioural components significantly correlated with ethnocultural empathy (r=0.193, p>0.05).

Following table provides linear regression analysis results for cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy being dependents and cultural experience variables being predictors.

Table 3

Predictors of Cultural Intelligence and Ethnocultural Empathy

Predictor	Cultural intelligence					Ethnocultural empathy				
	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.	B	SE	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	54.45	5.02		11.44	0	104.95	7.20		14.572	0
Growing up in multi-ethnic community	-2.36	3.56	-0.08	-0.66	0.51	2.96	5.11	0.07	0.58	0.56
Residing in multi-ethnic community	1.02	2.54	0.04	0.40	0.69	-2.35	3.64	-0.08	-0.64	0.52
Experience with other cultures	2.20	1.26	0.21	1.75	0.08	1.90	1.80	0.13	1.05	0.30
Communication in foreign language	3.56	1.21	0.31	2.94	0.004	3.61	1.74	0.24	2.08	0.04
Friends from other cultures	0.14	0.44	0.04	0.32	0.75	0.32	0.64	0.06	0.50	0.62

In the obtained linear model for cultural intelligence prediction via cultural experience variables, communication in foreign languages has shown to be sole significant predictor with the level of significance of 0.01 ($t=2.94$, $p=0.004<0.01$). When increased by 1, communication in foreign languages score causes cultural intelligence score to increase by 3.56. Experience with other cultures is significant predictor with the level of significance of 0.1 ($t=1.75$, $p=0.08<0.1$). Other cultural experience variables cause no significant prediction of cultural intelligence score ($|t|\leq 0.66$, $p\geq 0.51$). Changes in thus obtained linear model (Table 3) determine 19.6% of cultural intelligence score variability ($R^2=0.196$).

In the obtained linear model for ethnocultural empathy prediction via cultural experience variables, communication in foreign languages has shown to be the sole significant predictor with level of significance of 0.05 ($t=2.08$, $p=0.04<0.05$). When increased by 1, communication in foreign languages score causes ethnocultural empathy score to increase by 3.61. Other cultural experience variables cause no significant prediction of ethnocultural empathy score ($|t|\leq 1.05$, $p\geq 0.30$). Changes in thus obtained linear model (Table 3) determine 9.6% of cultural intelligence score variability ($R^2=0.096$).

The following table provides insight in possible mediation effect of communication in foreign languages to impact of other cultural experience variables.

Table 4

The Correlation and Partial Correlation Analysis with Controlling Communication in Foreign Languages Between other Cultural Experience Variables and both Cultural Intelligence and Ethnocultural Empathy

Dependents	Coefficients	Growing up in multi-ethnic community	Residing in multi-ethnic community	Experience with other cultures	Friends from other cultures
Cultural intelligence	Correlation	-0.106	0.012	0.305**	0.097
	Partial correlation	0.018	0.086	0.230*	0.150
Ethnocultural empathy	Correlation	-0.007	-0.030	0.216*	0.096
	Partial correlation	0.081	0.015	0.160	0.129

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

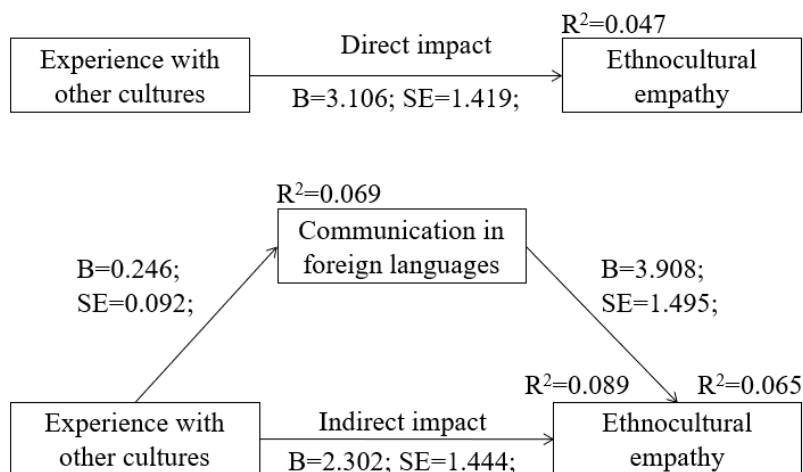
For every variable except experience with other cultures correlation with both cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy is not significant ($|r|\leq 0.106$, $p\geq 0.295>0.05$). The same holds

when the partial correlation analysis, for controlling communication in foreign languages, is performed ($|r| \leq 0.096$, $p = 0.341 > 0.05$).

The experience with other cultures significantly correlates with both cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy ($r = 0.305$, $p = 0.002 < 0.05$ and $r = 0.216$, $p = 0.031 < 0.05$, respectively). When communication in foreign languages is controlled, the correlation with cultural intelligence remains significant ($r = 0.230$, $p = 0.022 < 0.05$) but is slightly weaker. Hence, communication in foreign languages slightly improves prediction via experience with other cultures. However, when communication in foreign languages is controlled, the correlation of experience with other cultures with ethnocultural empathy is not statistically significant ($r = 0.160$, $p = 0.114 > 0.05$). Hence, the significant correlation of experience with other cultures with ethnocultural empathy is fully manifested through communication in foreign languages. In other words, the mediation occurs for communication in foreign languages as mediator variable. Following diagram illustrates mediation analysis.

Figure 1

Mediation Analysis Results



The Aroian test results indicate that while the mediation does occur, it is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance, but it is significant at the 0.1 level ($z = 1.81$, $0.05 < p = 0.07 < 0.1$). This means that a significant impact of experience with other cultures is manifested partially through communication in foreign language, or the partial mediation occurs (Kahrović & Avdović, 2023).

Therefore, cultural experience variables that should be taken into consideration when predicting ethnocultural empathy are communication in foreign languages and experience with other cultures. When it comes to cultural intelligence it is only the case for communication in foreign languages.

Discussion

One notable finding in this research is the strong connection between cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy. The results indicated moderate positive correlation between this variable with very strong evidence for its significance. Despite limited research linking ethnocultural empathy with intercultural competencies (Dyche & Zajac, 2001; Green, 1995), the findings of this study align with those previous studies. Additionally, other research studies have also included psychology students as participants. For instance, in the study by (Rasoal et al., 2009) it was shown that psychology students had significantly higher general empathic and ethno-empathic skills compared to students of medicine, nursing, and social work. These differences in ethnocultural empathy can be explained, among other things, by the expectations of culture and cultural milieu from psychology students (Tittler et al., 2022). That is, people simply expect that psychology students, by their profession, possess greater

ethnocultural empathy, which was confirmed by this research. Additionally, studies in psychology tend to have courses that are oriented towards students gaining higher cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy. Otherwise, the objectivity in their jobs or future research could be impaired. The impact of such educational institutional intervention has shown to have a significant impact (Eisenger et al., 2013; Grosch et al., 2023).

Thus, 100 psychology students, from different universities in Serbia participated in the research. This notion is important because these respondents were from different parts of Serbia, so it could be a good direction for further research to examine some individual dimensions of ethnocultural empathy in different environments. In this context, four dimensions of ethnocultural empathy can be emphasised: a) Empathic understanding and expression, which means the communication of prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes and beliefs, and includes emotional and affective reactions towards members of the other cultural groups; b) The second dimension is taking a perspective, and it is characterised by investing effort in understanding the members of another cultural group; c) The third dimension refers to the acceptance of cultural differences (understanding and acceptance of the traditions of another culture) and d) The fourth dimension is empathic awareness and is characterised by awareness and knowledge of the experiences of another group (Wang et al., 2003). Therefore, each of these dimensions could be examined individually, and possibly linked to some other variables. Additionally, the examination on how intensive is educational institutional intervention for improving ethnocultural empathy in each location treated.

The focus on increasing ethnocultural empathy should be prioritised and enhanced, especially in professions that require a deep understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural backgrounds (Cacciattolo & Aronson, 2023; Egitim & Akaliyski, 2024; Tittler et al., 2022). In the study by (Fleming et al., 2015), the level of ethnocultural empathy in dentistry and nursing students has been examined. A workshop emphasizing the significance of ethnocultural empathy, which all students attended, has been conducted by researchers. After attending the intervention workshop, the students' ethnocultural empathy was assessed. The findings show a statistically significant improvement compared to their initial levels.

So, in this paper, cultural intelligence is brought into relation with ethnocultural empathy. However, cultural intelligence was examined in different types of research, being linked to different constructs. Its importance in business communication is especially treated (Eisenberg et al., 2013). It is also emphasised that people with high cultural intelligence can develop completely new behaviour in a situation when they meet a member of another culture (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Failures in international negotiations are frequently attributed to the lack of intercultural competence among negotiators, highlighting the importance of cultural intelligence in successful outcomes (Groves et al., 2015). Therefore, its large scale impact and importance is obvious in certain cases.

Nowadays, there is also talk about various trainings and courses that could help in the development of cultural intelligence. For example, in the study by (MacNab, 2012) 743 respondents had contact with members of other cultures, to gain more knowledge about other cultures and better adapt and communicate with their members.

Educational institutions play a crucial role in fostering children's awareness of diverse cultures from a young age, starting in kindergartens and elementary schools. It is important for them to promote intercultural understanding and facilitate connections among children from varied cultural backgrounds (Lansford, 2022; Stengelin et al., 2022). There are indications that even selective trainings such as the ones in athletics (Moffit et al., 2022), peer support (Kim & Tausen, 2022; Stengelin et al.,

2022), students exchange projects (Sutherland et al., 2015), cross cultural training management (MacNab, 2012), helping skills (Lu et al., 2020), etc.

It is crucial for students to be exposed to a diverse range of cultures, beliefs, and perspectives in order to cultivate a sense of empathy and respect for others. Through education, students can learn to appreciate the richness of different cultures and ultimately become more accepting and inclusive individuals in a globalized world. Schools must prioritize teaching cultural competency and promoting intercultural communication in order to bridge the divides between different communities and foster a more harmonious society. It is through these efforts that we can truly embrace the beauty and complexity of the multicultural world we live in (Messner, 2023).

The importance of cultural intelligence is also emphasised when talking about the inclusion of national minorities in education. In addition, cultural encounters are essential for successful intercultural communication and educational inclusion in the era of globalisation. That is why it is important to enrich school programs with intercultural content, from all subjects (Stengelin et al., 2022).

More detailed approach to identifying potential socio-demographic factors of cultural intelligence. For instance, gender (Lu et al., 2020), marital status (Sejfović, et al., 2023), religion (Sharifi-Tehrani et al., 2019), etc., can be significant factor of important psychological variables. Technology development and its integration are not to be neglected as well (Kahrović & Avdović, 2023; Yesufu, 2021).

For more reliable results, it is important to include a more diverse range of respondents from various social groups.

Conclusions and Implications

This paper brought important results on the relationship between cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy and emphasised metacognitive and motivational dimensions as primary determinants of variations in this relationship. Details on how do intercultural competencies impact cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy were also explored. Communication in foreign languages was recognised as the most important predictor that additionally partially mediates the determination of ethnocultural empathy through experience with different cultures. Reliability of the data and choice of methods was discussed as well. Discussion on these results in relation to the ones existing was given with recommendations on possible improvements intercultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy at people.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could focus on expanding the sample size and scope of the study to include variables such as peer support, marital status, parenting status, location, and cultural background, to determine their impact on cultural intelligence and ethnocultural empathy. Additionally, new factors and differences in the effectiveness of educational interventions could be explored, with a focus on incorporating content such as social entrepreneurship into curriculum to enhance educational interventions.

The impact of technology development and integration could help mitigate the effects of technological development and integration. More detailed research focusing on Serbia, its cultural diversity, regions division, history, migrations impact etc are needed. Additionally, a mediation effect of more variables could be addressed.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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