



## EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND ETHNOCENTRISM LEVELS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN TURKEY<sup>i</sup>

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### **Abstract:**

This study, which aims to reveal the views of Pre-service Teachers in Turkey about cultural sensitivity concepts defined as seeing the mother culture as superior to other cultures, ethnocentrism and respecting other cultures, was designed with a relational screening model among quantitative research methods. The study was conducted in the 2017-2018 academic year, and 512 students participated in the study voluntarily. The data collected through the personal information form, ethnocentrism and cultural sensitivity scales as a result of the analyses, it was found between the mean scores of ethnocentrism and cultural sensitivity differed significantly according to the students' gender and having friends from different countries and/or cultures, and that cultural sensitivity differed significantly according to religiousness levels. While a negative, moderate and significant relationship was found between the views of Pre-service Teachers in Turkey about ethnocentrism and cultural sensitivity, it was found between ethnocentrism significantly predicts cultural sensitivity.

**Keywords:** culture, intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, pre-service teachers, Turkey

### **1. Introduction**

Globalization has made the contact of different cultural identities with each other and their coexistence inevitable. Nowadays, along with technological developments, communication, transportation and the fact that Turkey receives many immigrants from neighboring countries, it has become easier for people from different cultures to interact in real or virtual environments. Since cultural diversity characterizes all societies even though at different degrees, these societies need to find a way to live together and even to benefit from it (Parekh, 2002).

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The changes and developments experienced at the national and international levels have made the concept of "intercultural sensitivity" more important and have increased the need for individuals who recognize and understand differences and can empathize with different cultures.

One of the first social environments with the coexistence of cultural characteristics is the school (Dilmen and Öğüt, 2010: 237). Negative situations caused by these differences may stand out in the school environment where teachers and students with different cultural characteristics are in interaction and communication with each other. In their study, Özmen and Aküzüm (2010) determined that most of the conflicts taking place in schools result from cultural differences. In an education approach in which cultural differences are taken into account and sensitivity is cared, the most important task is undertaken by the teacher because the person who is the implementer of the education program, selects and forms the methods and techniques used, forms the learning environment and also makes an evaluation is the teacher (Polat, 2009: 15).

In order for culturally diverse students to benefit from equal educational conditions, teachers should provide students with academic and social behaviors and should create democratic learning environments by respecting their cultural differences (Ünlü and Örten, 2013: 289). Since teachers are mostly people who are taken as models in learning, the fact that they primarily demonstrate intercultural sensitivity by being aware of students' cultural differences and make it a part of their educational experiences is important in terms of providing individuals with intercultural sensitivity. The studies on behaviors have emphasized the effect of the teacher on students and revealed that students develop behaviors by observing and modeling their teachers (Külahoğlu, 2003: 12).

Ethnocentrism is defined as "*the fact that the individual considers his/her culture superior to other cultures and judges other cultures with the values of his/her culture*" (Jandt, 1995). The ethnocentric individual is expected to place himself/herself, the group of which he/she is a member, and culture at the center of the universe and to determine others accordingly. It is accepted that he/she has placed those who mostly look like him/her among those who are out of the group to the closest, and the others to further according to the degree of difference among them (Kartarı, 2003). Nevertheless, for the survival of a culture, the members of that culture should also recognize their own culture and protect it. However, when ethnocentrism reaches a certain level, it will lead to the blocking of communication between people from different cultures (Chen, 2010: 2). Ethnocentrism can be divided into two components as the natural acceptance of the individual's own culture and the individual's belief in the superiority of his/her own culture. Gudykunst and Nishida (1994: 89) stated that everyone could be ethnocentric to a certain extent and that reasonable ethnocentrism ensures that an individual feels that he/she belongs to a group and that positive commitment to the group increases.

Intercultural sensitivity is an important factor that determines the individual's perspective on the culture in which he/she has grown up, himself/herself, the world and other individuals. Each individual brings the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors he/she has acquired from his/her cultural experiences to his/her relations with other

people as a product of the culture in which he/she has grown up. However, when individuals from different cultures come together and live in harmony, it is necessary for these individuals to learn to develop alternative perspectives, in addition to the perspective offered by their cultures for ensuring the necessary respect and understanding and for the creation of a healthy communication process.

Chen and Starosta (1997) describe the concept of intercultural sensitivity as *“the individual’s ability to develop a positive emotion in terms of intercultural communication, which promotes an appropriate and effective behavioral pattern in the identification and understanding of cultural differences.”* According to Samovar, Porter and Mc Daniel (2010), intercultural sensitivity is expressed as the fact that an individual is sensitive to others and the cultures interacted and understands the others' worldview.

Chen and Starosta (1997) draw attention to the characteristics that individuals with intercultural sensitivity should have. These characteristics are listed as a motivating desire and tendency to understand, approve and accept differences. Individuals with intercultural sensitivity skills have high motivation, and they also have self-esteem, self-control, know how to establish empathy and exhibit open-minded characteristics. Zhao (2002) indicates that intercultural sensitivity is a key for intercultural activity and intercultural harmony.

Benett and Benet (2004) define intercultural sensitivity with a developmental process extending from ethnocentrism in which the individual considers his/her own culture as the center of reality to ethnorelativism in which the individual perceives his/her own culture in the context of other cultures and recognizes that different beliefs and opinions about reality may present.

Bennet (2004) defined the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity with two basic stages, each consisting of three sub-stages. The first basic stage, ethnocentrism, is the stage in which the individual considers his/her own culture as the center of reality and which consists of three sub-stages including "denial," "defense" and "minimization." Denial is the stage in which the individual considers his/her own culture as the single and real culture and avoids contact with different cultures by isolating himself/herself from psychological or physical differences. In defense, the second stage, the individual defends the goodness and greatness of his/her own culture and humiliates cultural differences. In minimization, the last ethnocentric stage, the individual universally accepts the worldview of his/her culture, tries to ignore cultural differences and tends to see different cultures similar to his/her own culture.

The transition from an ethnocentric point of view to an ethnorelative one means that the individual seeks and tries to learn cultural differences in a sense by accepting cultural differences instead of avoiding them, taking into account their importance and integrating them with his/her own cultural identity. Bennet (2004) named the first stage of ethnorelativism as "acceptance," and in this stage, cultural differences and alternative views on reality are accepted. In adaptation, which is the stage after acceptance, the individual can get the perspectives of individuals from different cultures and can learn and apply the behavior which is appropriate to the new worldview.

Experience of Difference					
Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
Ethnocentric Stages			Ethnorelative Stages		

**Figure 1:** Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

(Source: (Hammer & Bennett, 2001))

Intercultural sensitivity is being sensitive to cultural differences and the perspectives of individuals from different cultures (Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992: 414). It is a concept related to individuals' positive feelings such as curiosity about different cultures, recognition, knowing and enjoying (Chen and Starosta 1997: 5).

Accordingly, intercultural sensitivity can be defined as the ability to develop an optimistic feeling which promotes an appropriate and effective behavioral pattern in terms of intercultural communication in understanding and evaluating cultural differences. Such a definition indicates that individuals with intercultural sensitivity should have a motivating desire and tendency to understand, approve and accept differences. Such a desire and tendency bring along the inference of positive results from intercultural interactions (Chen and Starosta, 1997). In other words, the basic indicator of intercultural sensitivity is considered as approaching different cultures, subcultures and belonging ties with positive feelings.

In this study carried out for the examination of the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels of the faculty of education students in Turkey, answers to the following questions were sought:

- 1) What is the level of ethnocentrism and intercultural sensitivity of pre-service teachers?
- 2) Is there a significant difference between pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism and intercultural sensitivity levels according to gender?
- 3) Is there a significant difference between pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels according to their religiosity levels?
- 4) Is there a significant difference between pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels according to the state of having friends from different cultures?
- 5) Is there a significant relationship between pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels and intercultural sensitivity levels?

## 2. Research Method

The relational screening model, one of the screening models, was used in this study since pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism levels and the relationship between them were examined. Screening models are research approaches that aim to describe a past or present situation as it is. In the relational screening model, which is a type of screening model, an attempt to determine the presence and/or degree of covariance between two or more variables is made (Karasar, 2007: 81).

## 2.1. Participants

512 students studying in different departments of the Faculty of Education of a foundation university in Istanbul during the 2017–2018 academic year and selected by the random sampling method constituted the population of this study.

**Table 1: Demographic Information of the Study Group**

Variables	Groups	f	Percentage
Gender	Female	422	82.4
	Male	90	17.6
Grade level	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	247	48.2
	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	76	14.8
	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	100	19.5
	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	89	17.4
<b>Total</b>		512	100.0%

## 2.2. Data Collection Instruments

The "Personal Information Form" developed by the researcher, the "Intercultural Sensitivity Scale," and the "Ethnocentrism Scale" were used in the data collection. The "Intercultural Sensitivity Scale," which was developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) and developed and adapted into Turkish by Üstün (2011) and used in the study consists of 24 items and five basic sub-dimensions. The 5-point Likert-type scale was scored as "5=Totally Agree," "4=Agree," "3=Undecided," "2=Disagree," "1=Totally Disagree" for participants' answers to the statements. By taking into account the arithmetic mean scores of the scale, the scale was scored as 1.00-1.79 Very low, 1.80-2.59 Low, 2.60-3.39 Moderate, 3.40-4.19 High, and 4.20-5.00 Very High. The total Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be .86 (Üstün, 2011). The reliability coefficient obtained for this study is .84. Ethnocentrism Scale: It is a 22-item scale developed by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) and adapted into Turkish by Üstün (2011). Items 10 and 19 removed from the scale by Üstün as a result of the factor analysis were also not included in our study (Üstün, 2011: 77). The 5-point Likert-type scale was scored as "5=Totally Agree," "4=Agree," "3=Undecided," "2=Disagree," "1=Totally Disagree" for participants' answers to the statements. By taking into account the arithmetic mean scores of the scale, the scale was scored as 1.00-1.79 Very low, 1.80-2.59 Low, 2.60-3.39 Medium, 3.40-4.19 High, and 4.20-5.00 Very High. In the reliability study of the scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be .82. In this study, the reliability coefficient obtained for the whole scale is .81.

## 2.3. Data Analysis

The skewness and kurtosis values should range from -2 to +2 for the normal distribution of the data obtained from the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale and the Ethnocentrism Scale used in the study. Accordingly, it was found out that the total scores obtained from the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (skewness=.135; kurtosis=.383) and the total scores obtained from the Ethnocentrism Scale (skewness=-.110; kurtosis=-.295) met the normality requirement. The t-test was used for the significance of the

difference between the mean of the two variables, and the one-way analysis of variance was used for the significance of the difference between the mean of more than two variables. The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between the scores obtained from the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale and the Ethnocentrism Scale, and the multiple regression analysis was used to reveal the power of ethnocentrism level to predict intercultural sensitivity.

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 2:** Descriptive Values of the Ethnocentrism and Cultural Sensitivity Scales

Scales	N	X	Standard deviation
Ethnocentrism	512	2.37	.516
Intercultural Sensitivity	512	3.93	.431

Upon examining Table 2, it was observed that pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels were low by ( $X=2.37$ ) and their intercultural sensitivity levels were high by ( $X=3.93$ ). The results of the t-test according to the gender of pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels and cultural sensitivities are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** The Results of the t-Test According to the Gender of Pre-service Teachers' Ethnocentrism Levels and Cultural Sensitivities

Variables	Gender	N	X	ss	t-test		
					t	sd	p
Intercultural Sensitivity	Female	422	3.96	.425	3.346	510	.001
	Male	90	3.79	.435			
Ethnocentrism	Female	422	2.33	.472	-3.659	510	.003
	Male	90	2.54	.625			

Upon examining Table 3, it was determined that pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels ( $t_{510}=3.346$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and ethnocentrism opinions ( $t_{510}=3.346$ ;  $p<.01$ ) significantly differed according to gender. While female pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels ( $X=3.96$ ) were higher than male pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels ( $X=3.79$ ), female pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions ( $X=2.33$ ) were lower than male pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions ( $X=2.54$ ).

The results of the t-test according to the religiosity levels of pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels and cultural sensitivities are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** The Results of the T-Test According to the Religiosity Levels of Pre-service teachers' Ethnocentrism Levels and Cultural Sensitivities

Variables	Religiosity	N	X	ss	t-test		
					t	sd	p
Intercultural Sensitivity	Yes	407	3.91	.425	-2.093	510	.000
	No	105	4.01	.446			
Ethnocentrism	Yes	407	2.39	.499	1.949	510	.000
	No	105	2.28	.536			

Upon examining Table 4, it was determined that pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivities ( $t_{510}=-2.093$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and ethnocentrism opinions ( $t_{510}=1.949$ ;  $p<.01$ ) significantly differed according to their religiosity levels. While the intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers who expressed themselves as religious ( $X=3.91$ ) were lower than the intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers who did not express themselves as religious ( $X=4.01$ ), the ethnocentrism opinions of pre-service teachers who expressed themselves as religious ( $X=2.39$ ) were higher than the ethnocentrism opinions of pre-service teachers who did not express themselves as religious ( $X=2.28$ ).

The results of the t-test according to the state of having friends from different cultures of pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels and cultural sensitivities are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5:** The Results of the T-Test According to the State of Having Friends from Different Cultures of Pre-service Teachers' Ethnocentrism Levels and Cultural Sensitivities

Variables	Friend	N	X	ss	t-test		
					t	sd	p
Intercultural Sensitivity	Yes	378	3.98	.428	4.455	510	.000
	No	133	3.79	.404			
Ethnocentrism	Yes	378	2.31	.516	-4.397	510	.000
	No	133	2.53	.447			

Upon examining Table 5, it was determined that pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels ( $t_{510}=4.455$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and ethnocentrism opinions ( $t_{510}=-4.397$ ;  $p<.01$ ) showed a significant difference according to the state of having friends from different cultures. While the intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers who had friends from different cultures ( $X=3.98$ ) were higher than the intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers who did not have friends from different cultures ( $X=3.79$ ), the ethnocentrism opinions of pre-service teachers who had friends from different cultures ( $X=2.31$ ) were lower than the ethnocentrism opinions of pre-service teachers who did not have friends from different cultures ( $X=2.53$ ).

The correlation coefficient results between pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels and intercultural sensitivity levels are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6:** The Correlation Coefficient between Ethnocentrism and Intercultural Sensitivity

		Ethnocentrism
<b>Intercultural Sensitivity</b>	<b>r</b>	-.606
	<b>N</b>	512

Upon examining Table 6, it was observed that there was a moderate, negative ( $r=-.606$ ) and significant relationship between pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions and intercultural sensitivity levels ( $p<.01$ ).

The results of the simple regression analysis regarding whether pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels predict their intercultural sensitivity are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7:** The Results of the Simple Regression Analysis Regarding Whether Pre-service Teachers' Ethnocentrism Levels Predict Their Intercultural Sensitivity

Independent variable	Dependent Variable	B	Std. Error	( $\beta$ )	t	p	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
<b>Constant</b>	<b>Intercultural</b>	5.153	.072		71.096	.000	.606	.367	295.505	.000
<b>Ethnocentrism</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	-.514	.030	-.606	-17.190	.000				

Upon examining Table 7, it was observed that pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions were a significant predictor of their intercultural sensitivity levels ( $R=-.606$ ,  $R^2=.367$ ,  $F=295.505$ ,  $p<.000$ ). According to the regression analysis, the regression equation (mathematical model) regarding the fact that pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions predict their intercultural sensitivity is given below.

$$\text{Cultural Sensitivity: } 5.153 + (-.514 \times \text{Ethnocentrism}) \quad (1)$$

Pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions account for 36% of total variance in their intercultural sensitivity levels. According to the coefficient B, it is observed that there is a negative and moderate significant relationship between ethnocentrism and intercultural sensitivity. The coefficient  $\beta$  indicates how much change a one-unit change in an independent variable will cause in a dependent variable. For example, a -0.51 unit increase in ethnocentrism opinions leads to a 0.60 unit negative change in the rational decision-making style and reduces intercultural sensitivity. In other words, pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions negatively affect their intercultural sensitivity levels.

### 3. Results and Discussion

In this study in which the relationship between pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels and ethnocentrism levels was examined, it was determined that the intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers participating in the study were high and that their ethnocentrism levels were low.

Similarly, the result of a high intercultural sensitivity level is also supported by different research results (Neuliep et al., 2001; Dong et al, 2008; Rengi and Polat, 2014;



Gezer and Şahin, 2017; Boran and Arcaök, 2017; Spithourakis et al., 2009; Mc Murray, 2007; Onur-Sezer and Bağçeli-Kahraman, 2017; Yoğurtçu, 2018; Saygılı and Kana, 2018). There are also studies showing that intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism are at moderate levels (Meydanlıoğlu et al., 2015; Akın, 2016[30]; Uzun and Sevinç, 2015; Çoban et al., 2010; Abaslı and Polat, 2019). The results of the study show that pre-service teachers are open to recognizing people from different cultures. Furthermore, it can be considered as a positive result in that they will give qualified education for different cultures when they become teachers.

According to the result of the study, it was determined that female pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels were higher than male pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels and that female pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels were lower than male pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels. Similarly, this result is also supported by different research results (Altshulera, Sussmanb and Kachura, 2003; Banos, 2006; Wang et al., 2014; Çoban et al., 2010; Holme, Nokelainen and Tirri, 2009; Üstün, 2011; Talib and Hosoya, 2010; Saygılı and Kana, 2018). Moreover, although Üstün's (2011) results show that male pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism levels are higher compared to those of female pre-service teachers, there are also studies showing that gender is not an effective variable in determining intercultural sensitivities (Bayles, 2009; Hammer, et al., 2003; Spithourakis, et al., 2009; Chen and Starosta, 2000; Polat, 2009; Polat and Barka, 2012; Yılmaz and Göçen, 2013, Yurtseven and Altun, 2015; Akın, 2016; Bulduk et al., 2017; Boran and Arcaök, 2017). All these results show that there are discussions about gender.

According to the result of the study, pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism opinions show a significant difference according to the level of religiosity. Pre-service teachers who define themselves as religious have low intercultural sensitivity levels and high ethnocentrism opinions. High ethnocentric tendencies mean that the internal ties of that community are quite strong and that they are not very open to communication against external communities.

Students who define themselves as religious are expected to have low ethnocentrism levels and high intercultural sensitivity levels within the frame of Islamic Religious and Turkish culture. Among the general qualifications of the teaching profession of the Directorate General for Teacher Training and Development (2017), it is stated that "*it is aimed at teachers' having gained the complex problem solving, critical thinking, innovative production, effective communication, respect for cultural differences, skills to develop high levels of cooperation (...), which are considered as the 21st century's skills, and raising generations who can protect and promote their own national identity and consciousness*" (ÖYGGM, 2017: 2). According to Gudykunst and Nishida (1994: 89), everyone can be ethnocentric to a certain extent and reasonable ethnocentrism ensures that an individual feels that he/she belongs to a group and that positive commitment to the group increases. According to Özkalp (2002: 69), it has positive effects in terms of increasing commitment among ethnocentrism group members. Therefore, high ethnocentrism levels and low intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers who define themselves as religious can be explained as a response to Islamophobia formed against

Muslims, mainly in European countries, and to social problems caused by nearly five million Syrians in Turkey.

It was determined that pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity levels and ethnocentrism opinions showed a significant difference according to the state of having friends from different cultures. While the intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers who had friends from different cultures were higher than the intercultural sensitivity levels of pre-service teachers who did not have friends from different cultures, the ethnocentrism opinions of pre-service teachers who had friends from different cultures were lower than the ethnocentrism opinions of pre-service teachers who did not have friends from different cultures. The studies carried out at different educational levels are similar to the results of this study (Üstün, 2011; Banos, 2006; Neuliep et al., 2001; Öğüt, 2017; Bekiroğlu and Balcı 2014; Meydanoğlu et al., 2015; Tuncel and Arıcıoğlu, 2018). Having friends from another culture significantly affected intercultural sensitivity levels. The studies by (Akın, 2016; Yurtseven and Altun, 2015) can be given as examples of the studies determining whether having a friend from another culture affects cultural sensitivity. Accordingly, it can be said that interacting with other cultures and having a positive perception in this regard positively affect intercultural sensitivity.

#### 4. Conclusion

According to the result of the study, it was determined that there was a moderate, negative and significant relationship between pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions and intercultural sensitivity levels. This result indicates that the ethnocentrism level decreases as the intercultural sensitivity level increases. Similarly, this result is also supported by different research results (Neuliep et al., 2001; Dong et al., 2008; Öğüt, 2017; Yoğurtçu, 2018).

It is observed that pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions are a significant predictor of their intercultural sensitivity levels. Pre-service teachers' ethnocentrism opinions account for 36% of total variance in their intercultural sensitivity levels. It is observed that there is a negative and moderate significant relationship between ethnocentrism and intercultural sensitivity.

When the results of the study are evaluated in general, it can be recommended that pre-service teachers who will teach students from different cultures should recognize different cultures, should be supported to make friendship with individuals from different cultures and that an environment should be created for this friendship.

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Latife Kabaklı Çimen  
EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND  
ETHNOCENTRISM LEVELS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN TURKEY

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