

ETHNOCULTURAL EMPATHY OF ADOLESCENT FROM THE FOUR MAJOR TRIBES IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the level of ethnocultural empathy in adolescents from four major ethnic groups in Indonesia. Participants were students of the Guidance and Counseling Department at Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, recruited using a purposive sampling technique (n=32). They were students from Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, and Lampung ethnic groups. Data were garnered using an ethnocultural empathy scale and analyzed descriptively. The study result indicated that students from these four ethnic groups exhibited a high acceptance of cultural differences. It also found that Javanese, Malay, and Lampung students obtained the lowest score for empathic awareness. In contrast, the Sundanese students obtained the lowest score for empathic feeling expression, and the Malay for empathic awareness. This research could be used as a reference when developing counseling service strategies to develop ethnocultural empathy for adolescents in tertiary institutions that are adapted to the characteristics of their ethnic background.

Keywords: ethnocultural empathy, adolescents, tribes, counseling.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with ethnic, cultural, language, and religious diversity. While this diversity should be seen as the country's wealth that needs to be maintained and preserved, it sometimes also triggers conflicts. Multiculturalism and Indonesia are inseparable and do not always come with a harmonious social situation.

There have been numerous ethnic conflicts in the country, such as the conflict between the Bugis and Dayak communities in

East Kalimantan, between Madurese descent and Dayak people in West and Central Kalimantan, and prolonged conflicts between Javanese people and Chinese people (Taufik, 2012). Conflict also occurred between the Lampung and the Javanese community, which arose from the indigenous Lampung people's feeling of being isolated due to the Javanese transmigrants' arrival (Desike, 2021). Lampung people viewed the Javanese as too dominating, making indigenous

Lampung feel colonized in their own hometown.

Indonesia's diversity has given birth to various issues Indonesian people, as one united nation, should tackle in order to create a society that respect the differences and diversity. In this regard, education is considered an effective means to develop multicultural awareness in Indonesia. Education is believed to be able to develop individuals' empathy, tolerance, respect for differences and sense of togetherness.

Higher education is an educational institution responsible for educating the nation. It is responsible for producing graduates who are free from today's individualistic and egocentric era. The higher institution is demanded to prepare graduates with a new paradigm of success, namely, individuals with successful careers, high positions, and incomes while having integrity and solidarity.

University students are the country's future hope. They bear a huge responsibility as an agent of change who must have a critical mindset and a good personality. However, many issues still need to be addressed to achieve such a goal. Existing studies have reported various cases involving Indonesian students. One of the serious cases involved Luwu and Bone students' brawl, which caused property destruction and serious injuries (Hendra Cipto & Robertus Belarminus, 2021). This case is one of the ethnic conflicts involving students, which could be minimized if only they possessed understanding, gentleness, compassion, and empathy for others. Students in the teaching and education faculties who come from all cultural backgrounds in Indonesia as prospective teachers or educators of the nation's shoots should have high empathy. These students, as future teachers, will be required to handle various characteristics of students with different cultural backgrounds, and for this reason, they should develop ethnocultural empathy since they are still in college.

Lately, there have been a number of reports related to violence perpetrated by a teacher against his students. As summarized

in Solopos (2022), a teacher in a private junior high school in Klaten allegedly abused dozens of students in the local school environment. Dozens of students were persecuted because they had vandalized walls. This case shows that the teacher lacks understanding, gentleness, compassion, and empathy. Today, it seems difficult to find polite individuals who are willing to understand other people's difficulties and care about others' suffering.

As prospective teachers or counselors who will be responsible for guiding and directing students at school, Guidance and Counseling Department students need to have good empathy. Empathy is one of the important foundations for counselors to provide counseling services (Rogers, 1957). As educators of student character, school counselors need to understand how to become counselors with character, have personalities that can be role models for their students, be sensitive and responsive to problems experienced by students, and be able to provide effective counseling services to help optimize students' character development. The first step in achieving this goal is developing the school counselors. Rogers (in Jones 2011) has highlighted that empathy is one of the key elements in creating interpersonal relationships in the therapeutic process.

An ideal social life depends on social understanding and empathy (Howe, 2015). Empathy plays a role in enhancing humanity, civility, and morality (Eissenberg, 2000). It is not merely feeling what others are feeling but also communicating in a good manner and attitude. (Davis, 1996; Smith, 2015; Wright, Wachs, & Harper, 2018). Meanwhile, according to Wang et al. (2003), ethnocultural empathy is directed toward someone from another ethnic group. It reflects empathy towards individuals with different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The empathy crisis currently suffered by the Indonesian generation should be immediately addressed through social and educational efforts. Departing from this concerning phenomenon, we intended to investigate

ethnocultural empathy among students in the Guidance and Counseling Department of Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Having good ethnocultural empathy, i.e., one's understanding of situations and conditions of other people from different ethnic groups may allow prospective educators to develop social and interpersonal relationships in a multicultural learning process.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative descriptive research used a purposive sampling technique to recruit students from various ethnic backgrounds in Guidance and Counseling Department at Ahmad Dahlan University. Thirty-two students from different ethnic groups, i.e., Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, and Lampung, were recruited as participants. Data were collected using an ethnocultural empathy scale and analyzed descriptively.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Participants' responses to the ethnocultural empathy represent an overview of ethnocultural empathy among Guidance and Counseling department students in this study. Participants were first-semester students from classes A, B, C, D, and E, who came from Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, and Lampung ethnic groups, totaling 32 people. They were recruited based on the ethnic background dominant among first-semester students. This section takes a closer look at components of ethnocultural empathy: empathic feeling expression, empathic perspective taking, acceptance of cultural differences, and empathic awareness.

With regard to the first component, i.e., empathic feeling expression, 6.25% of students were in the high category, 90.63% were in the medium category, and 3.12% were in the low category. Regarding empathic perspective-taking, 12.50% of students were in the high category, 81.25% were in the medium category, and 6.25% were in the low category. Most students reported having a medium level of acceptance of cultural difference (i.e., 56.25%), 43.75% of them was in the high category, and none of them was in

the low category. Lastly, the majority of students (84.38%) exhibited a medium level of emphatic awareness, and only 3.12% were in the high category, while 12.50% of them were in the low category.

This paragraph describes participants' ethnocultural empathy in terms of their ethnic background. As mentioned earlier in this section, this study involved the four most dominant ethnic groups among first-semester students in The Guidance and Counseling Department: Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, and Lampung. The following is showing the average level of ethnocultural empathy for guidance and counseling study program students at UAD Yogyakarta in terms of ethnic background. Data analysis shows that Javanese students exhibit the highest mean score of ethnocultural empathy (116.62), followed by Lampung students (115.5), Sundanese (113.37), and Malay students (112.5).

Figure 1 below displays a bar chart presenting participants' ethnocultural empathy score in terms of their ethnic background.

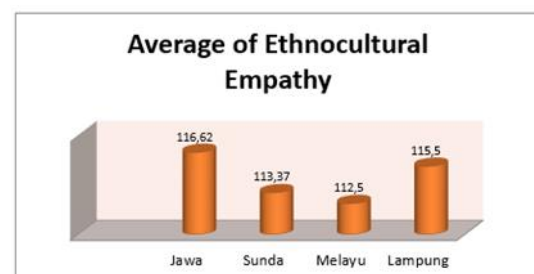


Figure 1

An overview of the Average Ethnocultural Empathy of UAD Guidance and Counseling Students in View of Ethnic Background

Regarding components of students' ethnocultural empathy, Javanese students exhibited the highest empathic feeling expression ($M= 2.91$), while Sundanese students exhibited the lowest empathic feeling expression ($M=2.69$). Meanwhile, Lampung students exhibited the highest perspective taking ($M= 2.90$), while Sundanese students exhibited the lowest perspective-taking ($M=2.70$). With regard to the acceptance of cultural differences, Javanese students

exhibited the highest mean score, while Malay students exhibited the lowest one (3.23 and 3.01, respectively). Javanese students also exhibited the highest mean score for empathic awareness ($M=2.77$), while the lowest mean score for this component was found among Malay students ($M=2.61$).

The bar chart in Figure 2 displays participants' mean score for each component of ethnocultural empathy based on their ethnic background.

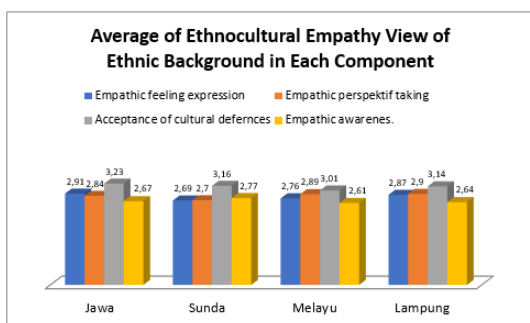


Figure 2

Description of the Average Ethnocultural Empathy of UAD Guidance and Counseling Students in View of Ethnic Background in Each Component

The study results indicate that students in this study had a medium level of ethnocultural empathy. However, With regard to the first component, i.e., empathic feeling expression, 6.25% of students were in the high category, 90.63% were in the medium category, and 3.12% were in the low category. Regarding empathic perspective-taking, 12.50% of students were in the high category, 81.25% were in the medium category, and 6.25% were in the low category. Most students reported having a medium level of acceptance of cultural difference (i.e., 56.25%), 43.75% of them was in the high category, and none of them was in the low category. Lastly, the majority of students (84.38%) exhibited a medium level of emphatic awareness, and only 3.12% were in the high category, while 12.50% of them were in the low category.

Data analysis shows that Javanese students exhibit the highest mean score of ethnocultural empathy (116.62), followed by

Lampung students (115.5), Sundanese (113.37), and Malay students (112.5).

Research conducted by Sampaio (2017) on 80 American children and 98 Brazilian children reported that sociocultural factors may influence children's empathy. The empathy of American children suggests that the sociocultural context in the United States stimulated early developmental perspective-taking in children. Thus, children in the USA were high in perspective-taking aspects. Meanwhile, since the Brazilian community emphasizes emotional connection through intimacy and affection, Brazilian children's empathy score was higher than American Children's.

In this study, Javanese students' high ethnocultural empathy may be accounted for by the fact that they have more opportunities to express empathy in everyday life than Sundanese, Malay, and Lampung students. These opportunities emerged because most university members (i.e., students, lecturers, and staffs) were Javanese. It should also be noted that Ahmad Dahlan was located in Yogyakarta city, where Javanese was the majority population. In this regard, Morelli, Lieberman, and Zaki. (2015) stated that although individuals can experience positive empathy for various social targets (e.g., strangers, co-workers, acquaintances), past work suggests that empathy is related to the closeness of a social relationship. In close relationships (e.g., friends, partners). The results of research by Gable and Reis in 2010 (in Morelli, Lieberman & Zaki, 2015) show that positive empathy can improve social relations by increasing perceptions of social closeness and building a source of relationships.

Regarding components of students' ethnocultural empathy, Javanese students exhibited the highest empathic feeling expression ($M= 2.91$), while Sundanese students exhibited the lowest empathic feeling expression ($M=2.69$). Meanwhile, Lampung students exhibited the highest perspective taking ($M= 2.90$), while Sundanese students exhibited the lowest perspective-taking ($M=2.70$). With regard to the acceptance of cultural differences, Javanese students

exhibited the highest mean score, while Malay students exhibited the lowest one (3.23 and 3.01, respectively). Javanese students also exhibited the highest mean score for empathic awareness (M=2.77), while the lowest mean score for this component was found among Malay students (M=2.61).

With regard to components of ethnocultural empathy, four ethnic groups in this study were found to exhibit the highest score in acceptance of cultural differences. Meanwhile, Javanese students exhibited the lowest score in empathic awareness, Sundanese students exhibited the lowest score in empathic feeling expression, Malay students exhibited the lowest score in empathic awareness, and Lampung students exhibited the lowest score in empathic awareness.

Wang et al. (2003) explained that ethnocultural empathy consists of four components: empathic feeling expression, emphatic perspective taking, acceptance of cultural differences, and empathic awareness. Empathic feeling expression is related to one's attitudes or affective or emotional responses towards a person from a different ethnic group. This expression of empathy can come from thoughts, feelings, words, or actions directly related to discriminatory experiences. Empathic perspective-taking denotes one's ability to understand the experiences and emotions of individuals from different ethnic or racial backgrounds by taking their worldview. Acceptance of cultural differences refers to one's understanding, acceptance, and evaluation of the cultural traditions and customs of individuals from different ethnic groups. Meanwhile, Emphatic awareness is awareness or knowledge that individuals have experienced interacting with individuals from different ethnic groups.

This study showed that participants in this study exhibited a good understanding, acceptance, and evaluation of cultural traditions and habits of individuals from other ethnic groups. However, this study noticed that Javanese, Malay, and Lampung students still lacked awareness of individuals' experiences in interacting with individuals from other ethnic groups that are different. In

contrast, Sundanese students still lacked affective or emotional responses to thoughts, feelings, words, or actions directly related to discriminatory experiences.

As an individual and social creature, a person needs to have cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence to achieve success in life. One's success in life is inseparable from other people's roles. Empathy is an important aspect that greatly influences success in building relationships. Empathy contributes to individual harmony in building social relationships. Therefore, empathy is an important attitude that every human being should have.

Empathy helps individuals understand and feel the conditions experienced by other people, whether they know them or not, without getting carried away by those feelings. Ethnocultural empathy may help Indonesian communities with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds develop more harmonious interpersonal relationships more harmonious based on mutual understanding and mutual respect. Ethnocultural empathy is needed by every generation, including guidance and counseling department students, who are prepared to work in the field of human relations and interact with counselees from various ethnicities and cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the four ethnic groups in this study exhibited high acceptance of cultural differences. It also shows that Javanese, Malay, and Lampung students in this study obtained the lowest score in empathic awareness, while Sundanese students obtained the lowest score in empathic feeling expression. The result of this study could be used as a consideration when developing counseling service strategies to develop ethnocultural empathy that is adjusted to university students' ethnic background.

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