

Prospective Teachers' Intercultural Sensitivity as the Effort to Actualize the Multicultural Education

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ABSTRACT

In response to the cultural diversity in Indonesia, multicultural education is required to provide the students with a proper level of intercultural sensitivity. However, to prepare for an ideal multicultural education for future generations, teachers must undoubtedly master intercultural sensitivity, even since they are still studying in university, as prospective teachers. Therefore, this study aimed to quantitatively investigate the intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup. As a result, the portrait of prospective teachers' intercultural sensitivity could be used as references in developing their characters as prospective multicultural educators. The respondents of this study were 1,000 prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and 800 prospective teachers at IAIN Curup. The data were garnered using a structured questionnaire to obtain accurate percentages of the intercultural sensitivity level of prospective teachers. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics by computing mean, standard deviation, and the categorical level of the gained scores. The findings revealed that prospective teachers at the two universities had a high level of intercultural sensitivity. The research's limitations, implications, and recommendations are provided following the data discussion and conclusion.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has 1,340 tribes, 300 ethnic groups, and 6 religions (Tjipto & Bernardo, 2019). Thus, multiculturalism is a social reality for Indonesian society. The multiculturalism of the Indonesian people, on the one hand, is an advantage as Indonesia is rich in cultural diversity, where each culture has values and potential to support Indonesia's progress. However, the condition of Indonesia, whose population has a variety of different cultures, on the other hand, can also be a potential factor triggering cultural conflicts affiliated with race, religion, and ethnicity (Noe et al., 2018; Warsah et al., 2019). This condition,

to some extent, is affected by the existence of the internet, which makes communication easier regardless of how far the distance is between the communicator and communicant (Uyun et al., 2021). One of the causes of conflict amid cultural diversity is intolerance (Warsah, Cahyani, et al., 2019). It becomes a social phenomenon that must be resolved by cultivating intercultural sensitivity competence through the education system, so that future generations have a spirit of tolerance towards differences. Nevertheless, some adolescents are still found to commit behaviors contrary to moral values and norms (Yudhani, Nashori, & Uyun, 2020).

Thus, based on Pancasila as the state ideology, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education, supports Indonesian children to be educated with a multicultural education system so that the values of tolerance and diversity are embedded in their identity (Harjatanaya & Hoon, 2018; Hoon, 2017; Raihani, 2017). Multicultural education is an education system incorporating different values from diverse socio-cultural affiliations (Barzanò et al., 2017). In a broader context, a nation's progress is somehow determined by the ability of educators to build the character of the future generation. The teacher acts as a lantern of the land, transferring their knowledge to the next generation's children (Indah, Uyun, & Budiman, 2021). Likewise, in multicultural education, teachers act as active facilitators to teach students intercultural competence when interacting amid very complex cultural differences. Intercultural competence can be mastered if they possess intercultural sensitivity. According to Chen and Starosta (2000), intercultural sensitivity is an affective aspect and the initial domain of intercultural competence, indicating one's desire to understand and accept cultural differences. Simply put, if intercultural sensitivity has been internalized in the domain of teacher and student attitudes, tolerant behavior will be formed in response to cultural differences and other social affiliations. Thus, the potential for cultural conflicts can be suppressed with the spirit of tolerance in the future. This concept shows how essential the mastery of intercultural sensitivity competence is. To prepare for an ideal multicultural education for future generations, teachers must master intercultural sensitivity, even since they are still studying in college as prospective teachers (Jun, 2016).

Intercultural sensitivity also demonstrates a person's ability to motivate him/herself to accept, appreciate, and understand cultural differences (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Regarding the issue of intercultural sensitivity, the researchers discovered a varied phenomenon among prospective teachers at the place where the researchers taught, namely at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup. The pilot study was conducted through interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) via the Zoom software (this platform was employed because the initial study data collection was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic). Per the pilot study, researchers could describe two sides of information. Several prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup did not have intercultural sensitivity, and some already had intercultural sensitivity. These two contradictory conditions sparked the interest of researchers to conduct a more serious, detailed, and in-depth study on the intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup.

In line with the goal of multicultural education that targets the mastery of intercultural sensitivity competence; as one of the entities that becomes a bridge to master intercultural competence, in the last seven years, there have been many research conducted, some of which were the research on the intercultural sensitivity of university students (Bloom and Miranda, 2015; Morad and Ghabanchi, 2019; Nameni and Dowlatabadi, 2018; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2018; Sarwari et al., 2017; Snodgrass et al., 2018; Tuncel and Aricioğlu, 2018), intercultural sensitivity of international students (Bae and Song, 2017) and international university students (Kim, 2019), intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers (Altan, 2018; Demir and Kiran, 2017), intercultural sensitivity of elementary and secondary school students (Mellizo, 2017), intercultural sensitivity of adolescents taking music subjects (Mellizo, 2019), intercultural sensitivity of kindergarten teachers (Monroe and Ruan, 2018), intercultural sensitivity of English teachers (Alaei and Nosrati, 2018), intercultural sensitivity of teachers teaching refugee children (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017), and intercultural sensitivity of teachers based on workplace background (Cojocariu and Boghian, 2020).

By studying the previous research mentioned above, it can be concluded that the present study had similarities in terms of the issue being investigated, the intercultural sensitivity. However, there were several different contexts found by the researchers. In general, a common but fundamental difference was that the present study was conducted in Indonesia and focused on examining more deeply the measurement of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers. In addition, pertaining to the research results, there has been no research specifically oriented to the domain of intercultural sensitivity in Indonesia. Indonesian scholars were more directly oriented towards the study of intercultural communication and intercultural education, and generally in the contexts of English language education and bilingual language speakers (See Abduh and Rosmaladewi (2018), Idris (2020), and Morganna et al. (2020)). Meanwhile, the essence of multiculturalism in Indonesia included many aspects and not merely the aspect of language.

Considering the importance of the essence of intercultural sensitivity for prospective teachers in Indonesia, as well as the literary void related to intercultural sensitivity studies for the Indonesian context, this intercollegiate study focused on filling the gap by being oriented to investigating the intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers studying at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup. They were involved as participants in this study because the two universities, UIN Raden Fatah and IAIN Curup, had many prospective teachers in various fields of science. These prospective teachers would educate future generations, undoubtedly millennials, embedded in the essence of multiculturalism in their social affiliations. The fundamental postulate was that prospective teachers possessing high intercultural sensitivity would educate future students in the multicultural education system mandated by the Indonesian government through implementing the 2013 Curriculum (known as K-13). The research question of this study is as follows: How is the intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup?

A Brief highlights of Intercultural Sensitivity

Intercultural sensitivity is one of the constituents, the affective component, of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is one of the goals of multicultural education. Students are expected to have the competence to interact with people of different cultures while respecting cultural differences (Jun, 2016; Tualaulelei, 2020). According to Byram et al. (2002), there are five dimensions of intercultural competence, namely intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness.

According to Byram et al. (2002), intercultural sensitivity is included in the dimension of intercultural attitudes. Based on Chen and Starosta (2000), intercultural sensitivity is the affective component of intercultural competence that indicates a person's desire to understand and accept cultural differences. Meanwhile, the cognitive component of intercultural competence is known as intercultural awareness, and the behavioral component is known as intercultural adroitness (skills to interact in intercultural dimensions) (Chen & Starosta, 2000). In the psychological theory of attitudes, Eagly and Chaiken (2007) suggest that the affective aspect is the initial domain indicating a person's tendency to do things. Thus, intercultural sensitivity is the initial domain that needs to be possessed by students and teachers to master intercultural competence, which is one of the targets of multicultural education. To prepare for future generations' ideal multicultural education, teachers must master multicultural competencies even since they are still studying in university as prospective teachers (Jun, 2016). Intercultural sensitivity demonstrates a person's ability to motivate oneself to accept, appreciate, and understand cultural differences (Chen & Starosta, 2000). It refers to the affective component and the initial stage before acquiring intercultural competence (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018).

However, Bennett (1993) defines intercultural sensitivity differently, where intercultural sensitivity is viewed according to the dynamics of ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. The ethnocentrism domain includes three stages: denial, defensiveness, and minimization. Denial describes the rejection of cultural differences. Defensiveness describes the process of recognizing cultural differences but still considering one's own culture as the most qualified. Minimization is the process of recognizing basic cultural

similarities but overriding the essence of differences. Meanwhile, the ethnorelativism domain also includes three stages: acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Acceptance denotes the ability to recognize differences and similarities, in addition to the understanding that the same type of behavior, to some extent, can be perceived in different ways by people from other cultures. Adaptation refers to the developmental process of empathy and environmental adaptation. Furthermore, integration is the process of redefining identity to connect to diverse cultural frames. However, the overall model appears to demonstrate cognitive responses to cultural differences. Theoretically, this model is quite contradictory as it can overlap with intercultural awareness.

According to Chen and Starosta (2000), there are three dimensions under intercultural competence theory. These dimensions consist of affective, which refers to intercultural sensitivity; cognitive, which refers to intercultural awareness; and behavioral, which indicates intercultural adroitness. Additionally, Nameni and Dowlatabadi (2018) and Sarwari et al. (2017) show that intercultural sensitivity is a primary factor favoring a person to build intercultural interactions effectively. Referring to Bae and Song (2017), people with high intercultural sensitivity will more easily adjust their behavior and perceptions in a multicultural environment. Based on the intercultural sensitivity model developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), intercultural sensitivity has five domains: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. These domains are essential and can help teachers and students carry out multicultural education (Jun, 2016).

The five domains of Chen and Starosta's (2000) model of intercultural sensitivity became a benchmark for knowing the extent to which a person has acquired intercultural sensitivity. According to this model, intercultural sensitivity can be recognized in terms of people's awareness in interaction and their appreciation and respect for the information exchanged and the individual complexity of others during cross-cultural communication. The first domain of this model, interaction engagement, shows a person with empathy towards others and his/her willingness to actively and continuously participate in the complexity of cross-cultural interactions. The second domain, respect for cultural differences, describes a person with an open mind to be willing to express him/herself and accept others in the way they express themselves. The third domain, interaction confidence, represents someone with high self-esteem and value participating in cross-cultural interactions' complexity and ambiguity. The fourth domain, interaction enjoyment, demonstrates a non-judgmental attitude that leads a person to enjoy accepting diverse views and cultures without making immature conclusions from any information received during cross-cultural interactions. The fifth domain, interaction attentiveness, describes a person with good self-monitoring to identify challenges arising in cross-cultural situations to make behavioral adjustments to the situation. Based on the above explanations, people with intercultural sensitivity can be identified by empathy, active engagement, open-mindedness, high self-esteem, non-judgmental attitude, and good self-monitoring during cross-cultural interactions.

2. METHODS

Research design

The design of this study adopted the epistemology of positivism. According to Creswell (2007), positivism is a thinking framework guiding deductive reasoning to uncover the truth from general postulates to specific facts. In the context of this study, the formulation of problems related to the level of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup was revealed using a quantitative approach by applying survey research (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Population and Samples

The survey in this study involved all prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup. The total population representing the prospective teachers at both universities was 1,812 individuals. This survey was intended to recruit as many samples as possible from their population. Thus, this survey deployed a convenient sampling technique (Fraenkel et al., 2012) to reach the aforesaid intention, in which those who were willing to fill in the given online questionnaire of intercultural sensitivity and those who submitted their works on the questionnaire were officially taken

as the samples. Following the foregoing process, this study reached 1,000 prospective teachers UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and 800 prospective teachers from IAIN Curup that could officially be recruited as the samples. Tables 1 and 2 below illustrate the demographic data of prospective teachers from UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup.

Table 1: Prospective teachers (faculty of tarbiyah) at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

Study Program	Semester				Total
	1	3	5	7	
Islamic Education (<i>PAI</i>)	19	13	31	17	80 people
English Language Education (<i>PBI</i>)	40	34	37	13	124 people
Arabic Language Education (<i>PBA</i>)	11	24	20	20	75 people
Elementary School Teacher Education (<i>PGMI</i>)	30	33	23	17	103 people
Mathematics Education	36	29	40	20	125 people
Management of Islamic Education (<i>MPI</i>)	40	20	25	15	100 people
Biology Education	28	22	30	13	93 people
Chemistry Education	33	40	30	23	126 people
Physics Education	17	19	25	14	74 people
Early Childhood Islamic Education (<i>PIAUD</i>)	38	24	27	11	100 people
Total					1,000 people

Table 2: Prospective teachers (faculty of tarbiyah) at IAIN Curup

Study Program	Semester				Total
	1	3	5	7	
Mathematics Education	24	16	17	13	70 people
Social Science Education	34	23	19	14	90 people
Islamic Education	30	26	23	26	105 people
English Language Education	40	30	33	27	130 people
Indonesian Language Education	30	20	20	10	80 people
Early Childhood Islamic Education	36	24	25	25	110 people
Elementary School Teacher Education	30	25	25	10	95 people
Arabic Language Education	20	20	19	11	70 people
Natural Science Education	15	15	13	7	50 people
Total					800 people

Data collection Technique

This survey employed a structured questionnaire to obtain accurate data of percentages related to the level of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers. The questionnaire used was a research instrument developed by Chen and Starosta (2000). This instrument was adopted because Chen and Starosta (2000) are the experts in intercultural sensitivity studies, and they have already validated and tested the instrument's reliability. In addition, this instrument was considered very reliable since it has been widely used by various researchers studying the intercultural sensitivity variables.

The questionnaire was then processed using Google Form to ease the researchers in distributing questionnaires to the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup. The

distribution of Google Form's link to the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang was carried out on August 1, 2021. In one week, precisely on August 8, 2021, 1,007 students had filled out the questionnaire. Considering the target of survey respondents, up to 1,000 prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, the researchers decided to set aside 7 respondents in the data analysis. Thus, it only involved questionnaire responses received from 1,000 prospective teachers. Meanwhile, the distribution of Google Form's link to the prospective teachers at IAIN Curup was carried out on August 5, 2021. In 10 days, precisely on August 15, 2021, a total of 821 students had filled out the questionnaire. Likewise, considering the survey target of up to 800 prospective teachers at IAIN Curup, the researchers decided to set aside 21 respondents in the data analysis. Thus, it only processed questionnaire responses received from 800 prospective teachers. The constructed framework of the instrument used in this study can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3.

Blueprint of questionnaire of intercultural sensitivity adopted from Chen and Starosta (2000)

No	Domain	Number of Item	Scale of Judgment
1	Interaction engagement	7 items (items 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, and 24)	Strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D),
2	Respect for cultural differences	6 items (items 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, and 20)	neutral (N), agree (A), and strongly
3	Interaction confidence	5 items (items 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10)	agree (SA)
4	Interaction enjoyment	3 items (items 9, 12, and 15)	
5	Interaction attentiveness	3 items (items 14, 17, and 19)	
Total number of items		24 items	

The indicators in the blueprint of the intercultural sensitivity instrument in Table 3 were adopted from a study conducted by Chen and Starosta (2000). Based on the analysis of intercultural sensitivity factors involving 414 students, their research resulted in five intercultural sensitivity indicators: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. All items of the five indicators had a factor loading of 0.50. Their study also informed that the 24-item indicator illustrated the empirical indicators of intercultural sensitivity and indicated a high internal consistency with a reliability coefficient of 0.86. Furthermore, their study involved 162 university students of the communication study program to test the concurrent validity of the intercultural sensitivity scale. Seven other intercultural instruments developed by the researchers were used for correlation. The intercultural sensitivity scale was further correlated with the seven instruments using the formula of Pearson product-moment correlation. Their analysis revealed that the intercultural sensitivity scale significantly correlated with the seven instruments by the p-value of < 0.05 and r-value ranging from 0.17 to 0.74. This analysis proved that the instrument of intercultural sensitivity is valid.

Data analysis

The survey data related to intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup were revealed through questionnaires analyzed using descriptive statistics, which employed the calculation of the mean, standard deviation, and total score as recommended in the data analysis style suggested by Cohen et al. (2011). The main reason of using such a descriptive, non-parametric analysis was because this study only worked on one variable which had nothing to do with pluralistic variables, so this study did not work on determining any correlation or effect of one variable on another.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

The data of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang were collected quantitatively using a survey method employing a questionnaire adapted from Chen and Starosta (2000). Table 4 below presents the analysis results of the questionnaire of intercultural sensitivity filled out by the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang.

Table 4.

The survey results of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

No	Domain	Mean	SD	Level
1	Interaction engagement	3.7	0.52	High
2	Respect for cultural differences	3.9	0.35	High
3	Interaction confidence	4.5	0.5	High
4	Interaction enjoyment	4.35	0.65	High
5	Interaction attentiveness	3.85	0.3	High
	Mean score of all domains	4.06		High

The data distribution results of the intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang can also be seen in the following figure:

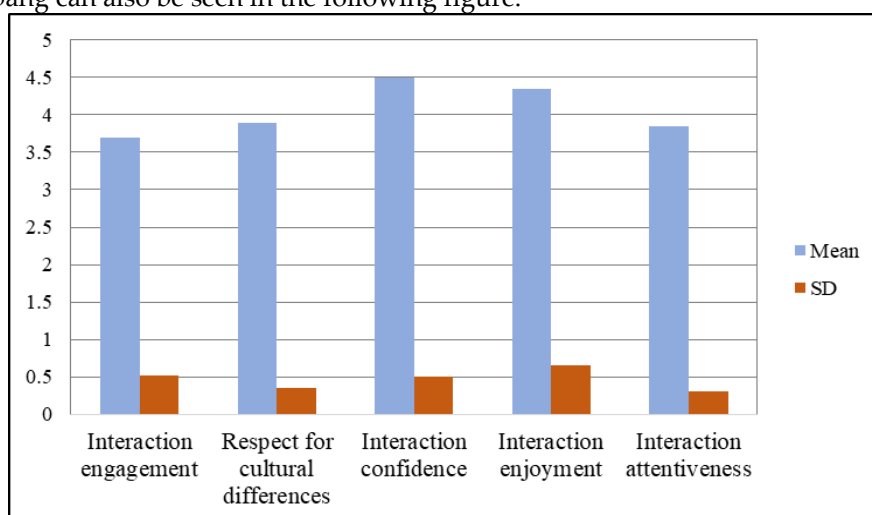


Figure 1. Distribution of survey data on intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

Table 4 and Figure 1 show that overall prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang had a high intercultural sensitivity score above the 5-scale median, which is 3, and the survey results also show the mean score of 4.06. Considering the maximum score on each domain of intercultural sensitivity, which was 5, the sequential order of domains from highest to lowest mean score was as follows: “interaction confidence”, represented by a score of 4.5 with a standard deviation value of 0.5; “interaction enjoyment”, represented by a score of 4.35 with a standard deviation value of 0.65; “respect for cultural differences”, represented by a score of 3.9 with a standard deviation value of 0.35; “interaction attentiveness”, represented by a score of 3.85 with a standard deviation value of 0.3; and “interaction engagement”, represented by a score of 3.7 with a standard deviation value of 0.52.

Per the intercultural sensitivity model developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), it can be interpreted that the high level of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang indicated that: 1) by possessing a high score of the domain of “interaction confidence”, prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang were considered having high self-esteem and value to be able to engage and participate in the complexity and ambiguity of cross-cultural

interactions, 2) With the high score of the domain of “interaction enjoyment”, the prospective teachers had a non-judgmental attitude leading them to enjoy the process of accepting the viewpoint and substance of other people’s culture. In this case, they were also able to delay their impression, instead of making premature conclusions regarding perspective evaluation while looking at other cultures when they participated in cross-cultural interactions, 3) With a high score on the domain of “respect for cultural differences”, they were considered having an open mind, able to express themselves, and able to openly accept others who expressed themselves as their culture, 4) With a high score of the domain of “interaction attentiveness”, they were thought to be having good self-monitoring to identify challenges emerged in cross-cultural situations, so that they could make behavioral adjustments to those situations, 5) With a high score of the domain of “interaction engagement”, they were regarded having empathy toward others. They were willing to actively and continuously participate in the complexity of cross-cultural interactions.

Overall, the level of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang was classified as the high category. Referring to the theoretical conceptualization described by Byram and Wenger (2018), this high level of intercultural sensitivity is a natural thing to happen in a multicultural society. In the context of this study, the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang were considered multicultural societies because, demographically, they came from various cultural backgrounds. Half of them were temporary immigrants from various ethnicities and regions outside Palembang City. They lived in Palembang temporarily, following their study at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. At this university, they gathered and collaborated to study the education system designed by UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. To sum up, as future teacher candidates, they already had an adequate level of intercultural sensitivity. They must maintain such a condition to become professional teachers who understand the differences in culture affiliated with their students, both in internal and external cultural aspects.

Intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup

The data collection process of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup was the same as that done at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. The data were collected quantitatively using a survey method employing a questionnaire technique. The questionnaire used was also adapted from Chen and Starosta (2000). Table 5 below presents the analysis results of questionnaires filled out by prospective teachers at IAIN Curup.

Table 5. The survey results of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup

No	Domain	Mean	SD	Level
1	Interaction engagement	4.15	0.523	High
2	Respect for cultural differences	3.94	0.398	High
3	Interaction confidence	3.75	0.551	High
4	Interaction enjoyment	4.22	0.715	High
5	Interaction attentiveness	3.88	0.406	High
	Mean score of all domains	3.988		High

The data distribution results of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup can also be seen in the following figure:

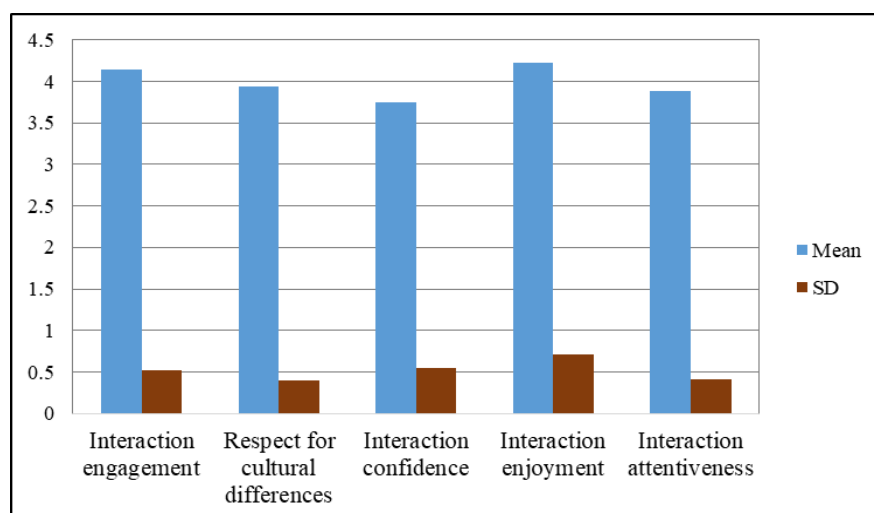


Figure 2. Distribution of survey data on intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup

Based on the survey results on 800 prospective teachers at IAIN Curup, it can be concluded that they had a high intercultural sensitivity as well. This condition is evidenced by their mean score of 3.988 (see Table 5 and Figure 2). Per the survey results, the domain of “interaction enjoyment” had the highest mean score, up to 4.22, with a standard deviation value of 0.715. The domain of “interaction engagement” was represented by a mean score of 4.15 with a standard deviation value of 0.523. The domain of “respect for cultural differences” was represented by a mean score of 3.94 with a standard deviation value of 0.398. The domain of “interaction attentiveness” was represented by a mean score of 3.88 with a standard deviation value of 0.406. Furthermore, the domain of “interaction confidence” was represented by a mean score of 3.75 with a standard deviation value of 0.551. The score of the domain of “interaction confidence” was the lowest. However, its mean score was still relatively high, up to 3.75.

Based on Chen and Starosta’s (2000) model, the high-level of intercultural sensitivity possessed by the prospective teachers at IAIN Curup indicated that they were: 1) inclined to have positive attitudes to interacting with people from different cultures, 2) wanting to engage in active communication with people from different cultures, 3) being tolerance for cultural differences, 4) trying to interpret and understand existing cultural differences in intercultural communication, 5) being confident in the process of meaning construction, and 6) participating actively in intercultural interactions.

Overall, the level of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup was classified as the high category. It is supported by Byram and Wenger’s argument (2018) that their natural conditions as part of Indonesia’s multicultural society supported the formation of natural intercultural sensitivity. Demographically, prospective teachers at IAIN Curup had a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They were a group of students coming from Curup City, Lebong City, Kepahiang City, Muko-Muko City, Pasemah Region, and Pagar Alam Region. Additionally, a small percentage of them were from Musi Rawas Regency, Lampung City, and Bogor City. At IAIN Curup, they gathered and collaborated to study the education system designed by IAIN Curup’s stakeholders. In short, as future teacher candidates, they already had an adequate level of intercultural sensitivity. It is very good to maintain such conditions to become professional teachers who understand the cultural differences affiliated with their students, both in internal and external cultural aspects.

The comparison of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup

In comparison, the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang had a slightly higher mean score of intercultural sensitivity than those at IAIN Curup, with scores of 4.06 and 3.988, respectively. However, both groups still had a high level of intercultural sensitivity. The following Table 6 compares the intercultural sensitivity measurements of the two student groups.

Table 6. The comparison of the intercultural sensitivity measurement results of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup

No.	Intercultural Sensitivity of Prospective Teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang			Intercultural Sensitivity of Prospective Teachers at IAIN Curup		
	Domain	Mean	SD	Domain	Mean	SD
1	Interaction engagement	3.7	0.52	Interaction engagement	4.15	0.523
2	Respect for cultural differences	3.9	0.35	Respect for cultural differences	3.94	0.398
3	Interaction confidence	4.5	0.5	Interaction confidence	3.75	0.551
4	Interaction enjoyment	4.35	0.65	Interaction enjoyment	4.22	0.715
5	Interaction attentiveness	3.85	0.3	Interaction attentiveness	3.88	0.406
	Mean score of all domains	4.06		Mean score of all domains	3.988	

The data distribution results can also be seen in Figure 3 below:

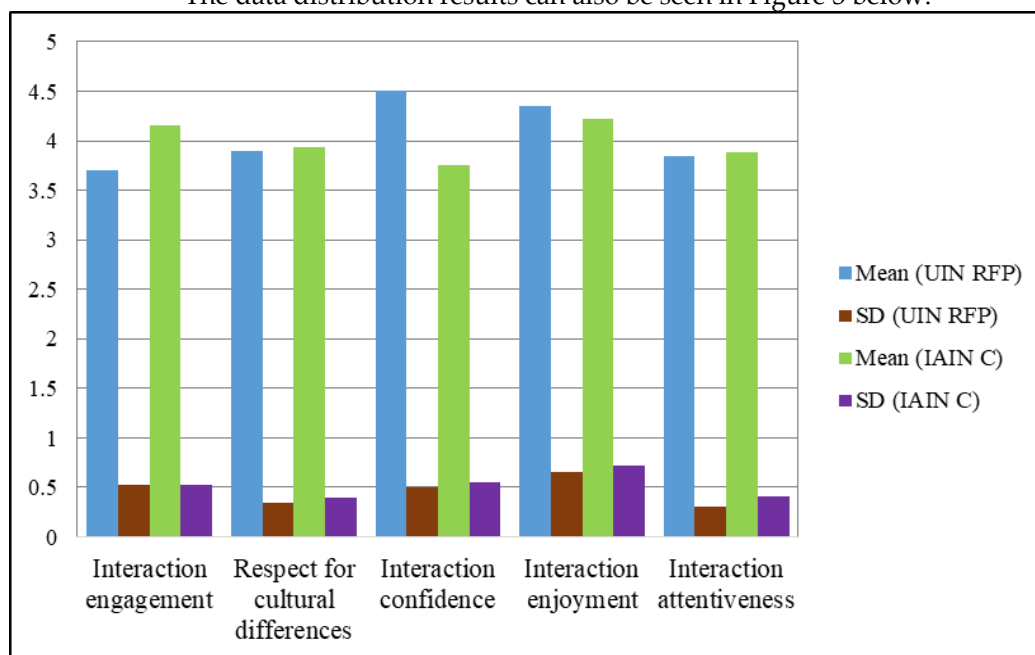


Figure 3. Intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup

Based on Table 6 and Figure 3, the highest intercultural sensitivity domain among prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang was the "interaction confidence". Meanwhile, at IAIN Curup, the highest domain was "interaction enjoyment". According to the model developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), the role of domains is as a set of affective constructs forming intercultural sensitivity. Thus, based on the data mentioned earlier, it can be generally interpreted that the domain of "interaction confidence" was the primary trigger for the high level of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Meanwhile, the primary trigger of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup was the domain of "interaction enjoyment". The order of the intercultural sensitivity domains of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, from highest to lowest, was "interaction confidence", "interaction enjoyment", "respect for cultural differences", "interaction attentiveness", and "interaction engagement". Meanwhile, for prospective teachers at IAIN Curup, the order of intercultural sensitivity domains, from highest to lowest, was "interaction enjoyment", "interaction engagement", "respect for cultural differences", "interaction attentiveness", and "interaction confidence".

In a more detailed interpretation, we can see that the domain of "interaction engagement" of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup ($M = 4.15$; $SD = 0.523$) was superior to those at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang ($M = 3.7$; $SD = 0.52$). It indicated that the prospective teachers at IAIN Curup had a slightly higher empathy towards cultural differences and were willing to be a little more active in participating in the complexity of cross-cultural interactions. In the domain of "respect for cultural differences", prospective teachers at IAIN Curup ($M = 3.94$; $SD = 0.398$) were also superior to those at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang ($M = 3.9$; $SD = 0.35$). It demonstrated that prospective teachers at IAIN Curup were a little more open-minded, expressive in actualizing themselves, and open to accepting others with different cultures. In the domain of "interaction confidence", prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang ($M = 4.5$; $SD = 0.5$) were superior to those at IAIN Curup ($M = 3.75$; $SD = 0.551$). It showed that prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang were inclined to have higher self-esteem and value to participate in the complexity and ambiguity of cross-cultural interactions. In the domain of "interaction enjoyment", prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang ($M = 4.35$; $SD = 0.65$) were superior to those at IAIN Curup ($M = 4.22$; $SD = 0.715$). It indicated that prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang were a little more non-judgmental, which led them to enjoy accepting the diverse views and cultures without making premature conclusions from any information received during cross-cultural interactions. Furthermore, in the domain of "interaction attentiveness", prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang ($M = 3.85$; $SD = 0.3$) seemed balanced with those at IAIN Curup ($M = 3.88$; $SD = 0.406$). It means that both (prospective teachers at both universities) had good self-monitoring to identify challenges in cross-cultural situations so that they could make behavioral adjustments.

Although there was a slight difference in the mean score of intercultural sensitivity between prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang ($M = 4.06$) and those at IAIN Curup ($M = 3.988$), as well as the differences in the high value per domain of intercultural sensitivity, the prospective teachers at both universities were considered having high intercultural sensitivity. To sum up, they already had good potential in terms of empathy, active engagement in cross-cultural interactions, open-mindedness, high self-esteem, non-judgmental attitudes, and good self-monitoring during cross-cultural interactions.

Discussion

This research was conducted based on a primary objective: investigating the intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup. It was initiated by the importance of multicultural education for Indonesian children, considering that they represent or are part of the multicultural population (Ansari, 2020). Therefore, they are undoubtedly affiliated with various cultures that have become a blueprint or a framework in their lives (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2017). To that end, prospective teachers who will be in charge of educating them must

initially master intercultural competence, which will be possible only if they possess intercultural sensitivity. It is in line with Chen and Starosta (2000), who explain that intercultural sensitivity is the initial phase towards intercultural competence.

The present study findings showed that prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup had high intercultural sensitivity with a mean score of 4.06 and 3.988, of a maximum score of 5. The highest domain of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang was the "interaction confidence". Meanwhile, the highest domain for those at IAIN Curup was the "interaction enjoyment". As the role of the domains in Chen and Starosta's model (2000) is as a collection of affective constructs forming intercultural sensitivity, it can be interpreted that in general, the domain of "interaction confidence" became the basis for the high intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Meanwhile, the primary trigger of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at IAIN Curup was the domain of "interaction enjoyment".

This study's results were in line with the research conducted by Alaei and Nosrati (2018), which examined the intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communicative competence of English teachers in Iran. The obtained data of intercultural sensitivity revealed a high level of intercultural sensitivity across all domains. However, considering the mean scores, there was a difference in the order of intercultural sensitivity domains. The order of intercultural sensitivity domains of English teachers in Iran, from highest to lowest, consisted of respect for cultural differences, interaction enjoyment, interaction attentiveness, interaction engagement, and interaction confidence.

However, the results of the present study differed from that of Nameni and Dowlatabadi (2018), which investigated the intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence of medical students in Iran based on four student-affiliated ethnic groups. Based on the intercultural sensitivity data, their study found that regardless of the categorized ethnic groups, the participants turned out to have a moderate level of intercultural sensitivity. Furthermore, to some extent, the present study findings were in line with the research conducted by Sarwari et al. (2017), which investigated the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication competence of post-graduate students at a university in Malaysia. Their study showed that the average intercultural sensitivity domains owned by the participants were classified into a moderate level. Such value subsequently represented a less sensitive attitude to differences. It differed from the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup. They had high intercultural sensitivity, which indicated that they had the potential to accept differences and be actively involved in cross-cultural interactions. However, Sarwari et al. (2017) study participants had little in common with those involved in this study, especially the prospective teachers at IAIN Curup, regarding the primary trigger of their intercultural sensitivity, namely the domain of "interaction enjoyment".

In contrast to this study's results, several previous studies had illustrated the direct impact of the low levels of intercultural sensitivity owned by their study participants. Per the research carried out by Kriauciūnienė (2014), the low level of intercultural sensitivity immediately impacted the emergence of conflict due to immature decision-making in dealing with differences. Erdogan and Okumuslar (2020) also pointed out that a low level of intercultural sensitivity was associated with a high level of ethnocentrism, a state where people feel that their culture is the most powerful and dominant, leading to the perception of other people's culture being inappropriate. The relatively same condition was also demonstrated and confirmed by research conducted by Bulduk et al. (2017), Chocce (2014), and Ustun (2011). Furthermore, Liu (2016) described that people with a low level of intercultural sensitivity could not collaborate with others. As a strong reflection, the opposite condition was discovered in one of the data revealed by Warsah et al. (2021), who studied collaborative learning. They discovered that students who were open to diverse views, or had a high level of intercultural sensitivity, showed active involvement in the collaborative learning. Furthermore, in Tabatadze and Gorgadze's (2014) study findings, the low level of intercultural sensitivity was represented by a low tolerance for differences in language, ethnicity, religion, and

race. Their participants' attitude of tolerance could merely be seen in intracultural dimensions. In short, the low level of intercultural sensitivity in multiculturalism impacted rampant conflict, high levels of ethnocentrism, ineffective collaboration, and intolerance. As illustrated in this study, the level of intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup could potentially make them safe from those negative impacts.

Intercultural sensitivity becomes the solution to cultural conflicts. In Oommen (2014), cultural conflict was represented as an intense tension, in both intrapersonal and interpersonal domains, between two people or groups that have unbalanced or diverse needs, beliefs, values, perspectives, or viewpoints. These variables are known as the constituents of culture. The above imbalances or differences possibly occur due to diverse orientations, such as a high level of self-concern followed by a low level of concern for others. In other words, such conditions are called ethnocentrism and are potentially causing cultural conflict. Someone dealing with a new or different culture will experience fear of interaction because of psychosocial pressures that cause him/her to choose not to engage in any interaction. Such concerns, if continued, might be a trigger for a cultural conflict. Thus, according to Oommen (2014), one way to overcome cultural conflict is to lower the level of concern for oneself and increase concern for others. Intrinsically, this point describes the concept of intercultural sensitivity as a solution to cultural conflict. According to Bennett (1993), intercultural sensitivity is a shift from the ethnocentric to the ethnorelative domain, or in other words, the dynamics from self-oriented to other-oriented without lowering the self-esteem. It was evident that the integrative principle of intercultural sensitivity as mentioned above could resolve cultural conflicts, such as the conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India (Croucher et al., 2011) and the perspective conflicts between groups of young and older workers in China (Zhang et al., 2005). Conceptually, when a person expresses concern for others, he/she will allow him/herself to experience the variables of intercultural sensitivity as described by Chen and Starosta (2000), namely interaction enjoyment, interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction attentiveness, and interaction confidence.

In short, with their high intercultural sensitivity, the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup already had good potential to become the future educators of multicultural generations. They were also considered potential to run a multicultural education system, one of the components of the *K-13* curriculum implemented by the Indonesian government (Rohman & Lessy, 2017; Rosyad, 2020). The present study findings implied that prospective teachers must maintain their intercultural sensitivity. Universities are also obliged to strive to maintain these ideal conditions by providing multicultural educational interventions, so that intercultural sensitivity continues to be consistently internalized.

4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup had a high intercultural sensitivity level. The most common intercultural sensitivity domain among prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang was "interaction confidence". Meanwhile, the highest domain owned by the prospective teachers at IAIN Curup was the "interaction enjoyment". Thus, the domain of "interaction confidence" was the primary trigger for the high intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Meanwhile, for those at IAIN Curup, the primary trigger was the domain of "interaction enjoyment". The order of intercultural sensitivity domains of prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah, from highest to lowest, was the "interaction confidence", "interaction enjoyment", "respect for cultural differences", "interaction attentiveness", and "interaction engagement". Meanwhile, for the prospective teachers at IAIN Curup, the highest-to-lowest order was the "interaction enjoyment", "interaction engagement", "respect for cultural differences", "interaction attentiveness", and "interaction confidence".

More specifically, it was evidenced that the prospective teachers at IAIN Curup were superior in the domains of "interaction engagement" and "respect for cultural differences" compared to the

prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Meanwhile, in the domains of “interaction confidence” and “interaction enjoyment”, the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang were superior to those at IAIN Curup. Furthermore, in the domain of “interaction attentiveness”, the prospective teachers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and IAIN Curup seemed balanced.

Reflecting on this study’s results, it is recommended that further research be conducted to investigate more deeply the intercultural sensitivity of Indonesian prospective teachers and observe their practice in providing classroom interventions per the subjects they teach to confirm the suitability of their intercultural sensitivity level and pedagogical practices. Such kind of scientific studies is expected to be able to contribute essential knowledge of intercultural sensitivity to the academics who are interested in the field of multicultural education. In addition, although this survey-based research employed large-scale data on the intercultural sensitivity of prospective teachers at the two universities, the contextual and in-depth factors related to their high level of intercultural sensitivity had not been revealed. Therefore, a naturalistic and constructive epistemology needs to be done to uncover the contextual and detailed factors of the prospective teachers’ intercultural sensibilities.

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