Investigating the Relationships between Ethno-cultural Competencies, Attitudes towards Teaching National Values and General Competencies of Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

The study aims to examine the relationships between pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies, their attitudes toward teaching national values, and their general competencies. The research employs a comparative relational survey method, characteristic of general survey models. The population consists of students enrolled in pedagogical faculties at state universities in Kazakhstan during the 2023–2024 academic year, with a sample of 276 participants aged 19 to 28, selected through random sampling. Data collection utilized the Teacher Efficacy Perception Scale, Ethnocultural Efficacy Scale, and Attitude Towards National Values Scale. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27, applying an Independent Samples t-test to compare teaching competencies, ethnocultural competencies, and attitudes toward national values by gender, and One-Way ANOVA F-test techniques to find out differences based on the year of study. The study found that pre-service teachers reported moderate levels of ethnocultural competency and teaching efficacy, but high levels of positive attitudes toward national values. Compared to their male counterparts, female pre-service teachers demonstrated higher perceptions of ethnocultural competencies and teaching efficacy, but there was no gender-based differences in their attitudes toward national values. Similarly, while upper-class students demonstrated higher ethnocultural competencies and teaching efficacy, attitudes toward national values did not differ significantly by the year of study. Notably, perceptions of teaching efficacy had the strongest effect on ethnocultural competencies. These results recommend enhancing pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies through the addition of cultural awareness modules, the implementation of gender-sensitive programs, the expansion of internships and practical coursework, and the creation of mentoring programs that foster a sense of professional competence. Digital platforms could also be used to offer virtual cross-cultural experiences, and attempts should be made to maintain a balance between teaching national values and contemporary teaching methods.

Keywords: *Ethno-cultural competencies, National values, General competencies of teacher candidates*

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Introduction

Education systems must increasingly address cultural diversity in a world that is becoming more interconnected. This implies that pre-service teachers must acquire ethnocultural competencies and strategies for teaching national values. Ethnocultural competencies equip educators to understand their own cultural identities while fostering meaningful interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds, whereas the instruction of national values is crucial for strengthening national identity and promoting social unity (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010).

Educate students about their diverse cultural identities and foster a respectful, inclusive learning environment. Creating teaching strategies that respect students and give them a suitable learning environment depends heavily on teachers' awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity (Ndiangui et al., 2024). The transmission of national values in teaching processes is crucial because teachers have a significant influence on students and serve as significant role models, shaping them in terms of national values (Kulnazarova, 2018; Karimova et al., 2024; Milligan et al., 2018). The teaching of national values forms individuals' identities and functions to reinforce social unity and ensure cultural continuity. However, evaluating how teacher education programs cultivate both ethnocultural competencies and attitudes toward national values remains essential. Current programs should focus on equipping pre-service teachers with effective strategies to build both general teaching skills and ethnocultural awareness (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This study seeks to investigate the relationships between pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies, their attitudes toward teaching national values, and their general teaching abilities.

Within this framework, the objective of this study is to investigate the relationships between pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies, their attitudes toward teaching national values, and their general competencies. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following sub-research questions: (i) What are the characteristics of pre-service teachers' attitudes toward national values, ethnocultural competencies, and teaching competencies? (ii) Do preservice teachers' teaching competencies, ethnocultural competencies, and attitudes toward national values vary by gender? (iii) Do pre-service teachers' teaching competencies, ethnocultural competencies, and attitudes toward national values vary by the year of study? (iv) Can the ethno-cultural efficacy of pre-service teachers be predicted by their teaching efficacy and attitudes towards national values?

Literature Review

Ethnoculture and the Importance of Ethnocultural Competencies

With the growing cultural diversity in educational settings brought about by globalization, teachers must acquire ethnocultural competencies. Migration, in particular, transforms classroom demographics, compelling educators to heighten their ethnocultural awareness in order to provide inclusive and responsive education (Banks, 2015). Gay (2018) highlights the critical role of ethnocultural competencies for teachers in teaching effectively within multicultural settings, given the rapid pace of globalization. As classrooms become more culturally diverse, educators need to understand students' unique learning styles, values, and communication methods (Baishymyrova & Sadykova, 2024; Kuzembayeva et al., 2024; Nieto, 2010).

Ethnocultural competencies empower teachers to foster an inclusive learning environment, especially in multicultural classrooms (Kutluca & Shpendi Şirin, 2024; Ladson-Billings, 2009). By recognizing students' cultural backgrounds and tailoring instructional approaches accordingly, teachers play an essential role in promoting educational equity and enhancing student performance (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Since cultural diversity shapes educational processes and the future of societies, teachers' ethnocultural competencies contribute to the development of students as global citizens (Gollnick & Chinn, 2017).

Ethnocultural Competencies in Teacher Education Programs

Integrating ethnocultural competencies into teacher education programs aims to increase pre-service teachers' cultural understanding and skills. Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue that teacher training programs, through various multicultural education modules, prepare pre-service teachers to work effectively with students from various cultural backgrounds. By incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy into teacher training, these programs enable future teachers to succeed in diverse classrooms (Gay, 2010). Numerous studies highlight effective practices in teacher education, such as experiential learning and cultural immersion programs, which Garmon (2004) asserts can foster positive attitudes in pre-service teachers toward culturally diverse student populations. Sleeter (2001) emphasizes that multicultural teaching approaches enriched by critical thinking and self-reflection are instrumental in cultivating pre-service teachers' ethnocultural awareness. Such approaches encourage preservice teachers to recognize their biases and learn how to counter them in classroom settings (Howard, 2006).

Research examining the impact of ethnocultural competencies on teacher-student relationships and academic outcomes indicates that culturally responsive teaching practices enhance students' academic performance. Gay (2000) found that these methods can significantly improve the academic success of minority students. Such strategies allow students to communicate more openly, boost their engagement in the classroom, and foster more active participation in the learning process (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In addition to improving student achievement, culturally responsive education builds a safe and secure learning environment (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Therefore, teachers' ethnocultural competencies strengthen teacher-student relationships, helping students feel a sense of belonging in their educational environment (Banks, 2009). As a result, teachers' ethnocultural skills contribute to the students' academic success as well as their social and emotional growth (Howard, 2010).

In the existing literature, studies show that teachers' ethnocultural competencies directly impact students' educational experiences. Sleeter and Grant (2007) found that culturally responsive teaching techniques improve both students' academic outcomes and their confidence and sense of social belonging. In this context, teachers who develop strong, positive relationships with students help instill greater commitment to school life, which in turn enhances academic performance (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teachers' ethnocultural competencies also bolster students' trust in the educational system and their connection to the school atmosphere (Martorana *et al.*, 2021). According to Noguera (2003), culturally responsive teaching practices make marginalized students feel more valued and accepted in school settings. Such an approach increases academic achievement and minimizes disciplinary issues as students tend to behave more positively in an environment where they feel understood and appreciated (Klingner *et al.*, 2005).

Teaching National Values

Education policies emphasize national values to reinforce national identity and foster social cohesion. Banks (2008) explains that national values consist of social norms and ethical principles shared through education, playing a crucial role in constructing national identity. The perception and scope of national values vary between countries; for instance, France emphasizes secularism in its educational programs as an element of national identity, whereas in the United States, values like democracy and freedom are central to the education system (Schutz, 2011).

National values facilitate social integration and bring people together around a shared identity (Durkheim, 2005). Incorporating national values into educational programs contributes to students' sense of national identity and supports social integration (Green, 1997). However, the definition and instruction of national values depend on the society's value system, historical background, and current political structure (Robinson, 2020). While some societies emphasize unity and solidarity through national values, others aim to balance these with universal principles, such as individual rights and freedoms (Arthur, 2010).

Teachers play a key role in instilling national values in students, as students primarily adopt these values through their teachers. Teachers thus function as more than knowledge transmitters; they also embody and model national values for their students (Lian et al., 2020). Teachers convey these values through classroom instruction as well as their behaviors, attitudes, and social interactions (Halstead & Pike, 2006). It is essential that teachers balance universal values with national ones, promoting values like tolerance, respect, and justice alongside patriotism and national responsibility (Arthur, 2003). Teachers should use pedagogical techniques that foster national values while allowing students to interact with local and global perspectives to achieve this (Osler & Starkey, 2005).

Teachers need to foster students' critical thinking abilities and national values during this process. In the globalized context of today's world, it is essential for educators to teach national values and values that encourage respect for diverse cultures and ideologies (Johnson & Morris, 2010). A balanced approach to teaching both national and universal values is necessary to accomplish this goal (Davies, 2006).

Several factors influence teachers' attitudes toward teaching national values, including personal beliefs, cultural background, and teacher training (Alam & Mohanty, 2023). Teachers' personal beliefs can significantly shape their views of national values and their approach to teaching them. A teacher with a nationalist perspective, for instance, might prioritize national values, whereas a teacher with a more universalist viewpoint might try to find a balance between national and universal ideals (Hansen, 2001). Additionally, teachers' cultural backgrounds play a critical role, as teachers from diverse cultural groups may interpret national values based on their own cultural perspectives (Barton & Levstik, 2004). This diversity can result in varied approaches to teaching

national values, as some teachers may see national and universal values as compatible, while others view them as potentially conflicting (Osler, 2009).

The political climate and social dynamics of a society shape teachers' attitudes toward national values. Social and political shifts can redefine the emphasis on national values, influencing how teachers approach teaching them (Apple, 2004). For instance, during periods of conflict or crisis, there is often increased emphasis on national values, whereas during times of peace, there may be a greater focus on universal values (Robinson, 2020). Teachers may adjust their pedagogical strategies and attitudes in response to these social and political changes (Zembylas, 2005).

General Competencies of Prospective Teachers

Educational success widely recognizes the essential skills that prospective teachers must acquire to teach effectively. Such competencies generally encompass fundamental teaching abilities like communication, classroom management, and assessment methods (González et al., 2018). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) point out that effective communication is one of the most essential skills a teacher must possess. Through effective communication, teachers can enhance student engagement and participation in learning processes. Additionally, classroom management is crucial for maintaining order and focusing students' attention on the lesson (Emmer & Evertson, 2013). Developing these fundamental skills is vital for pre-service teachers as they prepare to deliver effective instruction. Vollmer & Klette (2023) argues that general competencies form the backbone of teachers' professional expertise, guiding pedagogical decisions in teaching. Classroom management and assessment are especially crucial for supporting students' academic success and monitoring their learning progress (Stronge, 2018). Such competencies empower teachers to effectively guide students and adjust instructional strategies as needed (Kunter, Baumert, & Köller, 2007).

Teacher education programs emphasize developing general competencies in pre-service teachers. These programs provide various pedagogical approaches that support learning communication skills, classroom management, and student assessment methods (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Schön (1987) suggests that reflective practices, in which pre-service teachers evaluate their teaching experiences, are a valuable tool for professional growth. These practices help them analyze classroom experiences and address challenges they face. Effective teacher education programs

emphasize combining theory with hands-on experience to develop general competencies (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Experiential learning methods, in particular, allow pre-service teachers to analyze real classroom scenarios and develop the skills necessary to address these situations (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Moreover, these programs give candidates opportunities to practice classroom management and assessment, speeding up the competency-building process (Korthagen & Nuijten, 2022). A key component of these programs is the provision of ongoing feedback, enabling candidates to self-assess and develop strategies for continuous improvement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Effective teaching requires the balanced development of general competencies and specific competencies. For example, even if a teacher excels in classroom management, their effectiveness may suffer if they fail to comprehend the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Therefore, teachers should adopt a holistic approach to teaching, combining general pedagogical skills with cultural awareness (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Moreover, teaching national and universal values requires a balance between general and specific competencies. Teachers must be culturally and ethically sensitive while using general pedagogical skills to manage the classroom and promote national values (Sleeter & Grant, 2007). This illustrates how teachers' integration of both types of competencies contributes to the holistic development of students.

While general pedagogical skills equip teachers to handle essential tasks like classroom management, communication, and assessment, competencies focused on cultural sensitivity and value-based education allow teachers to engage more meaningfully with students from diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2010). Banks (2015) asserts that the combination of general and specific competencies in teachers positively impacts students' academic and personal growth. Various theoretical frameworks explore the relationship between cultural competencies and approaches to teaching national values. Social identity theory and multicultural education theory, among others, provide insight into how educators use ethnocultural awareness to impart national values. According to multicultural education theory, teachers should design their teaching to respect students' diverse cultural backgrounds, enabling them to support the formation of their cultural identities and national identities (Gay, 2010; Shah et al., 2023). On the other hand, social identity theory asserts that interactions with social groups shape individuals' identities, which in turn shapes

teachers' approach to teaching national values (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Ethnocultural competencies equip teachers to engage with diverse identities, fostering a more inclusive approach to teaching national values (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Research examining the influence of teachers' general and ethnocultural competencies on students' academic and social outcomes underscores the positive impact of these skills. Studies by Stronge (2018) demonstrate that teachers' general competencies, such as classroom management and communication, directly enhance student achievement. Additionally, research shows that ethnocultural competencies positively impact students' social development and engagement with learning (Gay, 2010). Teachers' cultural sensitivity can create a safer school environment, leading to higher academic success for students (Howard, 2010). Furthermore, teachers' attitudes toward teaching national values influence students' acceptance of them. Barrett et al. (2001) argue that a teacher's stance on national values strongly affects how students internalize them. Research on how teachers' general competencies relate to value education practices reveals that effective classroom management and clear value-transmission strategies help students better understand and adopt these values (Sleeter & Grant, 2007). Research indicates that teachers' attitudes toward national values can enhance students' academic and social achievements. Milligan et al. (2018) notes that positive teacher attitudes toward national values promote students' social skills, including civic awareness and social responsibility. The existing literature, however, provides limited insight into the relationship between ethnocultural competencies and attitudes toward teaching national values. Research on the interaction between these two areas remains limited, despite the general acceptance that cultural competencies may influence teachers' approach to value education (Banks, 2015). A comprehensive framework detailing how teachers balance national value transmission with students' diverse cultural identities is largely missing from the literature. More research is needed on the role ethnocultural competencies play in teaching both national identity and values (Gay, 2010). Existing studies primarily focus on developing ethnocultural competencies in teachers but do not sufficiently examine how these skills affect value education in practice (Nieto, 2010). Consequently, this gap highlights a need for further exploration of how education policies and teacher training programs can balance multicultural education with the fostering of national identity.

This study contributes to the field by analyzing the relationships among pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies, attitudes toward national values, and general professional competencies. The study highlights the connection between pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies and their professional competencies, underscoring the significance of cultural awareness in the teaching profession. This suggests that the capacity of pre-service teachers to engage with diverse cultural and ethnic groups requires enhancement, necessitating the incorporation of additional content into the curricula in this area. The study examined the variations in pre-service teachers' competencies based on demographic factors, including gender and grade level, offering insights for education faculties to tailor programs to meet student needs. The study's recommendations indicate that practices aimed at enhancing ethnocultural awareness in education are effective, thereby informing the development of educational policies and teacher training programs. Innovative proposals, including the utilization of digital platforms for sharing cultural experiences, provide a distinct perspective on the incorporation of modern methods in teacher education, thereby advancing digitalization initiatives in the field.

Method

Research Model

This research adopts a comparative correlational survey model, a subset of general survey models. Survey models, as Nardi (2018) describes them, are "research approaches that aim to reveal a situation or problem that has existed in the past or currently exists as it does," emphasizing the importance of measuring or observing variables within their natural settings. Relational survey models, in particular, "aim to determine the existence and/or degree of change between two or more variables concurrently" (Nardi, 2018). This study aligns with the relational survey model by investigating pre-service teachers' teaching competencies, ethnocultural competencies, and attitudes toward national values, along with the interrelationships among these variables. Additionally, the study uses a comparative survey method to explore variations in these competencies and attitudes based on gender and year of study among pre-service teachers.

Study Sample

The participants for this study comprise students studying in pedagogical faculties at state universities in Kazakhstan during the 2023-2024 academic year. Using a random sampling approach, the sample was drawn from pre-service teachers. Initially, data from 281 pre-service

teachers were gathered, but the responses from four participants were excluded due to incomplete or erroneous completion of the scales. The study included 276 participants, aged 19 to 28, after identifying and removing five outliers in the subsequent analysis phase. Table 1 presents the distribution of pre-service teachers' demographic data.

Table 1

Analysis of Demographic Data of Teacher Candidates

		n	%
Gender	Female	160	58,00
	Male	115	41,17
Class	1	66	23,91
	2	95	34,42
	3	58	21,01
	4	57	20,65
Monthly Income	High	61	22,10
	Middle	158	57,24
	Low	57	20,65
Age	18-19	86	31,15
	20-21	121	43,84
	22 and upper	69	25,00
	Total	276	100,0

Data Collection Tools

Teacher Efficacy Perception Scale

The study employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1: strongly agree" to "5: strongly disagree" to measure the degree of agreement among pre-service teachers with the provided statements. The researchers adapted the Teacher Efficacy Perception Scale, originally developed by Sünbül and Aslan (2007), into Kazakh. The researchers performed factor analysis on each of the 10 items, yielding consistent results. Principal component analysis revealed a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.76, supporting the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Construct validity was assessed using exploratory factor analysis, with a factor loading threshold of 0.40, as recommended by Louangrath and Sutanapong (2018). Analysis showed that factor loadings ranged between 0.47 and 0.69 across the 10 items, confirming that the scale was unidimensional with

consistent items. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the Kazakh version of the scale was 0.84.

Ethnocultural Competence Scale

Researchers developed an 18-item "Ethnocultural Competence" scale, drawing on previous instruments and studies by Lebedeva *et al.* (2004), Queen (2011), and Soldatova (2006). Preliminary testing for construct validity and reliability was conducted with pre-service teachers. Exploratory factor analysis revealed a three-factor structure, with these factors accounting for 48.9% of the variance. The three subscales measure were: (1) cognitive competence regarding ethnocultural knowledge (8 items), (2) affective and motivational aspects (5 items), and (3) behavioral competence in ethnocultural contexts (5 items). The scale uses a 5-point Likert response format, with no reverse-scored items. The Cronbach's alpha values for the subscales were 0.87, 0.85, and 0.85, respectively, and the overall reliability coefficient was 0.87.

Attitude Scale towards National Values

The "Attitude Scale towards the Teaching of National Values," developed by Çetin (2015), was translated into Kazakh to evaluate pre-service teachers' attitudes towards national values. This single-dimensional scale consists of 15 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). Exploratory factor analysis confirmed a one-factor structure, with factor loadings above 0.38 and a total variance explanation rate of 55.74%. For the purposes of this study, the scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.92.

Data collection

Data were gathered from pre-service teachers through an online survey, distributed via social media and email. The invitation explained the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations, including informed consent. Only students who voluntarily agreed to participate filled out the survey.

Assistance was sought from the administrations of the teacher training faculties due to time constraints in the online distribution and collection of the questionnaires. The survey's introduction section explained to participants that the survey would only use their responses for scientific purposes. It stressed that participants were not required to disclose their names or affiliations but must provide the most accurate answers to ensure research integrity. Furthermore, the study

assured participants that their responses would remain within its scope. Prior to data collection in the study, the scales, which underwent testing on a randomly selected group of 10 individuals using a straightforward sampling method, were distributed to 312 pre-service teachers following necessary revisions and implementation in the standard teaching process. Out of 302 submitted questionnaires, 276 were deemed eligible for analysis, resulting in a return rate of 88.46% for the research measurement tools. Online administration of the scales leads to automatic data collection in spreadsheet format from the Google Form page.

Analysis

Data were gathered from pre-service teachers through an online survey, distributed via social media and email. The invitation explained the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations, including informed consent. Only students who voluntarily agreed to participate filled out the survey.

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the relationships between the variables. Prior to conducting statistical analyses, the data collected from the three scales were assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to ascertain compliance with the assumptions of normal distribution. Levene's test assessed the homogeneity of the distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the data satisfied the assumptions of normal distribution. Levene's test indicates that the sample data exhibit homogeneity of variance (Table 2).

Table 2

Normality and Homogeneity Tests

	Tests of Normality / Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
	Statistic	Df	P	F	p
Ethnocultural Competence Total	0,196	276	0,168	1,405	0,237
Teacher Perception of Efficacy	0,183	276	0,103	3,141	0,077
Attitude towards National Values	0,192	276	0,152	0,805	0,370

Due to the normal distribution of the data, the independent samples t-test was used to compare teaching competencies, ethnocultural competencies, and attitudes toward national values based on

gender, while one-way ANOVA was used to examine differences by the year of study. The study used a significance level of 0.05 for all analyses.

The study employed multiple regression analysis to investigate the relationships among variables. Prior to conducting the multiple regression analysis, VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values were computed, yielding a range of 1.287 to 1.289 (Table 3). The values (VIF < 3) suggest the absence of collinearity issues among the variables (Yurt, 2023).

Table 3

Collinearity Statistics Results for Variables

Model	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions (Constant)	Teacher Efficacy	Attitude	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	VIF
1	2,973	1,00	0,00	0,00	0,00		
2	0,014	14,43	0,17	0,99	0,30	0,777	1,287
3	0,013	15,18	0,83	0,01	0,70	0,779	1,289

a. DependentVariable: EthnoculturalCompetence

Findings

The study's findings are organized around the research questions and summarized in the results tables, which reveal insights into the pre-service teachers' teaching competencies, ethnocultural competencies, and attitudes toward national values. In this context, descriptive analysis results for the variables of the study are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive analysis of pre-service teachers' teaching competencies, ethnocultural competencies and attitudes towards national values

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cognitive competence on an ethnocultural basis	276	1.00	5.00	3.42	0.64
Affective and motivational factors	276	1.00	4.89	3.49	0.60
Behavioral competence on an ethnocultural basis	276	1.00	4.88	3.23	0.65
Ethnocultural Competence Total	276	1.00	4.75	3.38	0.54
Teacher Perception of Efficacy	276	1.00	4.40	3.39	0.57

| Attitude towards National Values | 276 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.83 | 0.62 |

As displayed in Table 4, descriptive statistics indicate that the mean score of the pre-service teachers on the ethnocultural competencies scale was $\bar{x}=3.35$, the teacher efficacy perception scale yielded a mean of $\bar{x}=3.39$ and the attitude toward national values scale revealed a mean of $\bar{x}=3.83$. These results suggest that while the participants' competencies in teaching and ethnocultural skills were moderate, their attitudes toward national values were high, demonstrating a strong positive orientation toward these values.

Table 5

Pre-service teachers' teaching competencies, ethnocultural competencies and attitudes towards national values based on gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p
Cognitive competence on an ethnocultural basis	Male	160	3.49	0.58	1.987	0.048*
	Female	115	3.33	0.70		
Affective and motivational factors	Male	160	3.58	0.57	2.790	0.006*
	Female	115	3.38	0.63		
Behavioral competence on an ethnocultural basis	Male	160	3.29	0.61	1.866	0.063
	Female	115	3.15	0.70		
Ethnocultural Competence Total	Male	160	3.45	0.50	2.554	0.011*
	Female	115	3.28	0.59		
Teacher Perception of Efficacy	Male	160	3.45	0.56	2.180	0.030*
	Female	115	3.30	0.57		
Attitude towards National Values	Male	160	3.88	0.59	1.810	0.071
	Female	115	3.74	0.65		

Table 5 presents the results of the t-test comparisons of the participants' competencies and attitudes by gender. The analysis revealed a t-value of 1.987 for the 'Ethnocultural Cognitive Competence' subscale, 2.79 for the 'Affective and Motivational Factors' subscale, 1.866 for the 'Ethnocultural Behavioral Competence' subscale, and 2.554 for the entire ethnocultural competence scale. These findings indicate a statistically significant difference by gender in the 'Cognitive' and 'Affective and Motivational' subscales, as well as in the overall ethnocultural competence scores, with female pre-service teachers scoring higher than their male counterparts. However, the 'Behavioral Competence on Ethnocultural Basis' subscale showed no significant gender difference ($p > 0.05$).

In terms of teaching efficacy, a t-value of 2.180 was found, showing a significant difference in teaching efficacy perceptions by gender, with female pre-service teachers again scoring higher than males. No significant gender difference was found for attitudes toward national values, suggesting that both male and female pre-service teachers have similar attitudes in this area.

Table 6

Pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies based on the year of study

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p
Cognitive competence on an ethnocultural basis	1	66	3.32	0.54	3.745	0.012*
	2	95	3.32	0.50		
	3	58	3.56	0.58		
	4	57	3.59	0.90		
Affective and motivational factors	1	66	3.52	0.54	1.656	0.177
	2	95	3.39	0.53		
	3	58	3.58	0.52		
	4	57	3.56	0.81		
Behavioral competence on an ethnocultural basis	1	66	3.11	0.59	3.831	0.010*
	2	95	3.15	0.52		
	3	58	3.30	0.60		
	4	57	3.45	0.87		
Ethnocultural Competence Total	1	66	3.31	0.46	3.537	0.015*
	2	95	3.29	0.42		
	3	58	3.48	0.46		
	4	57	3.53	0.80		

Table 6 shows that in the 'Cognitive Competence' subscale, an FF-value of 3.745 was observed; in the 'Affective and Motivational Factors' subscale, an F-value of 1.656; in the 'Behavioral Competence' subscale, an F-value of 3.831; and in the entire ethnocultural competence scale, an F-value of 3.537. The lack of significant difference in the 'Affective and Motivational Factors' subscale suggests similar motivational orientations across various years of study ($p>0.05$). However, significant differences were identified in other areas, with further analysis using Tukey's test indicating that third- and fourth-year pre-service teachers demonstrated significantly higher ethnocultural competencies than their lower year of study peers.

Table 7

Comparison of pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching efficacy based on the year of study

	Classroom	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Perception of Teacher Efficacy	1	66	3.31	0.49	6.769	0.000*
	2	95	3.24	0.58		
	3	58	3.53	0.46		
	4	57	3.60	0.67		

Table 7 shows the results of the F test comparison of pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching efficacy based on the year of study. An F value of 6,769 was found between the participants' perceptions of teaching efficacy scores. This result indicates a significant difference among the scores of the participants based on the year of study. Further analysis using the Tukey test revealed that third- and fourth-year students had stronger perceptions of teaching efficacy than those in earlier years.

Table 8

Comparison of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards national values based on year of study

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p
Attitude towards National Values	1	66	3.73	0.53	1.919	0.090
	2	95	3.70	0.66		
	3	58	3.86	0.61		
	4	57	3.89	0.60		

As shown in Table 8, an F-value of 1.919 was calculated for attitudes toward national values by the year of study. It was found that there was no significant difference in the participants' national value attitude scores.

Table 9

Multiple Regression Analysis Results on the Prediction of Ethno-Cultural Competencies by Teaching Competence and Attitudes Towards National Values

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	p
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.496	0.228		10.961	0.000*

| 0.140 | 0.063 | 0.148 | 2.209 | 0.028* |
| 0.108 | 0.058 | 0.123 | 1.845 | 0.066 |

$R=0.233$; $R^2 =0.054$; $F=7.908$; $p<0.05$

Table 9 displays the multiple regression analysis exploring the predictive power of teaching efficacy and attitudes toward national values on ethnocultural competencies. The regression coefficient for the relationship between teaching efficacy, attitudes toward national values, and ethnocultural competencies was 0.265, which is significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that these predictors collectively have a moderate relationship with ethnocultural competencies. The R^2value of 0.054 suggests that approximately 5.4% of the variance in ethnocultural competencies can be explained by the combination of teaching efficacy and attitudes toward national values. Teaching efficacy was the only one of these to show statistical significance, highlighting its influence on pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies.

Discussion

This study has thoroughly examined the interrelationships among pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies, their attitudes toward national values, and their overall teaching efficacy. The results of the study showed that pre-service teachers had a moderate level of perceptions regarding their ethnocultural and instructional competencies. This suggests that while pre-service teachers demonstrate some awareness and knowledge, their competencies require further development. There is a need to emphasize cultural awareness and professional competence enhancement within education faculties. The literature highlights the importance of practical experience and continuous guidance, especially for developing cultural competencies (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2018). Furthermore, pre-service teachers should gain exposure to diverse cultural contexts to improve these competencies (Kim, 2024). These findings underscore the importance of ongoing professional development, given the evolving nature of the teaching profession.

Participants' positive attitudes towards national values align with the expectations, particularly in countries like Kazakhstan, where national values and cultural heritage are central to the education system. Pre-service teachers' strong attitudes indicate that the learning process effectively transfers these values to students. This result is consistent with research indicating that educational programs successfully promote national identity and values (Voltz et al., 2003). These findings

emphasize the need for educational support and hands-on experience to develop both professional and cultural competencies in pre-service teachers. According to Sleeter (2012), cultural competence development should involve theoretical instruction as well as practical experiences and classroom activities. Furthermore, strong feelings toward national values imply that educators can actively contribute to the formation of a national identity in the classroom. The significance of programs that will enhance future teachers' professional competencies and cultural awareness must be emphasized in this context.

The study showed gender differences in ethnocultural competencies, with female pre-service teachers scoring higher than their male peers. This finding aligns with research suggesting that gender roles influence empathy and social awareness, with women tending to exhibit greater emotional sensitivity (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Higher scores among female participants in the "affective and motivational factors" subscale highlight their strengths in emotional and motivational awareness (Gilligan, 1982). Women's deeper engagement with cultural differences reflects a more relational approach, which aligns with the Ethics of Care theory (Noddings, 2013). In addition, gender differences in cognitive and affective dimensions, such as "cognitive competence" and "affective and motivational factrs," suggest that female pre-service teachers demonstrate a deeper capacity for processing cultural awareness. These findings align with previous studies highlighting gender as a key factor in the development of cultural competence. Research from various cultural contexts further confirms that women typically demonstrate stronger social awareness and higher levels of empathy (Vohs & Heatherton, 2001). However, the absence of significant gender differences in the "behavioral competence on ethnocultural basis" subscale suggests that both female and male pre-service teachers perform similarly when applying their cultural awareness in practice. Increased experience and targeted training can further develop the behavioral dimension of competence, as this result suggests.

The discovery of gender differences in ethnocultural competencies shows that educational processes reflect gender roles. Women's higher levels of empathy and cultural awareness align with traditional gender expectations. Research indicating that women are more sensitive to cultural diversity supports this finding (Cross & Madson, 1997). However, these differences are not solely a result of gender roles; individual experiences and educational programs also play a critical role in shaping these competencies. Social Role Theory, which posits that societal expectations and

roles shape gender differences, explains the effect of gender on ethnocultural competencies. Women, who often assume caregiving and relationship-management roles, tend to develop stronger emotional and social competencies than men (Eagly, 1987). Women receive socialization from childhood that fosters empathy, emotional awareness, and relational thinking, while men receive encouragement for competitive behavior and individual goals (Wood & Eagly, 2012). In this study, female pre-service teachers scored higher than males in the "affective and motivational factors" sub-dimension, a result consistent with Social Role Theory. Women's tendency to maintain social ties and form empathic relationships with diverse cultural groups contributes to their enhanced ethnocultural competence. Carol Gilligan developed the Ethics of Care Theory, which further explains that women tend to think relationally and take responsibility for others in their moral development and decision-making (Gilligan, 1982). According to this theory, women are particularly adept at recognizing the needs of others and providing care. The findings of this study, which show higher scores for female pre-service teachers in ethnocultural awareness and related motivational factors, illustrate how relational and empathic approaches manifest in their teaching practices. When engaging with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, women's care-oriented approach might enhance the development of higher ethnocultural competence.

The finding of gender differences in perceptions of teaching efficacy suggests that gender may play a key role in shaping pre-service teachers' professional expectations and self-perceptions. The higher teaching efficacy reported by female pre-service teachers may reflect the greater support they receive within educational environments. Additionally, women's stronger interest in and commitment to the teaching profession could contribute to this finding, as teaching has historically been a female-dominated field (Güven & Baltaoğlu, 2017). In contrast, male pre-service teachers may experience lower perceptions of teaching efficacy due to insufficient social support in education or societal expectations that encourage them toward more technical or scientific professions. The perception of teaching as a less "masculine" career may further diminish male teachers' sense of professional competence (González et al., 2018). Regarding attitudes toward national values, no significant gender differences were identified, suggesting that these values are deeply embedded and widely embraced across society, irrespective of gender. This finding suggests that a shared cultural and educational foundation, rather than personal or social identities, shapes the attitudes of both male and female pre-service teachers toward national values. The study also found that ethnocultural competencies increase with years of study, indicating that pre-service

teachers develop greater knowledge and awareness as their education advances. Students in upper classes, such as third and fourth years, displayed higher ethnocultural competencies, likely due to the cumulative experience gained through their studies. Theoretical learning, along with practical experiences such as internships, appears to play a critical role in fostering these competencies. These findings underscore the idea that professional competence evolves over time, with ethnocultural awareness increasing as pre-service teachers engage more deeply with both academic content and real-world teaching experiences (Martorana et al., 2021).

Güven and Baltaoğlu (2017) found that pre-service teachers developed more positive attitudes toward multicultural education and ethnocultural awareness as they approached graduation. Similarly, Romin et al. (2020) reported that pre-service teachers' ethnocultural awareness grew as they encountered more diversity throughout their educational journey, with this awareness becoming more noticeable in upper classes. The absence of significant differences across the sub-dimensions of the scale suggests a closer relationship between ethnocultural awareness and behavioral competencies, rather than cognitive or motivational factors. This indicates that as pre-service teachers advance in their education, they gain cognitive understanding of ethnocultural issues and develop the behavioral skills required to apply this awareness in practice. The significant difference in perceptions of teaching efficacy by the year of study level suggests that teaching skills and self-efficacy improve over time. As a result of gaining professional experience and knowledge about the teaching profession, pre-service teachers in their third and fourth years reported higher perceptions of teaching efficacy than those in earlier years of study (Woolcott et al., 2024). Practical experiences such as internships at advanced stages of education further enhance students' perceptions of their teaching competencies. These findings align with prior research. For example, González et al. (2018) found that pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching efficacy improved significantly with each successive year of study. Similarly, Orongan et al. (2021) noted that fourth-year pre-service teachers exhibited higher self-confidence and greater teaching efficacy. This trend suggests that as pre-service teachers acquire more professional knowledge and hands-on experience, their competence and confidence in the teaching profession increase.

The lack of significant differences in attitudes toward national values across years of study suggests that these values are deeply ingrained and relatively stable throughout the teaching

process. Early life typically shapes social and cultural elements, such as national values, independent of personal educational experiences, and they tend to remain consistent over time (Mader & Schoen, 2023). This finding indicates that while national values remain static throughout the educational journey, professional competencies, such as teaching skills, exhibit significant development. The differences in perceptions of teaching efficacy by year of study highlight the importance of teacher training programs in fostering this perception. Practical experiences, involvement in professional activities, and opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge are critical for building teaching efficacy (Ay, 2017). Supporting pre-service teachers with internships and applied courses allows them to better understand their teaching abilities and increases their sense of competence. These hands-on experiences reinforce theoretical knowledge and contribute to developing the confidence necessary for professional success in the teaching field.

Social Cognitive Theory and Gradual Development Theory can explain the variation in pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching efficacy by year of study. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of environmental interactions and personal experiences in shaping individuals' beliefs and behaviors. This theory states that as pre-service teachers advance through years of study and acquire real-world experience, their teaching efficacy gradually increases. This effect is particularly evident in the later stages of their education, where practical lessons and observation strengthen their sense of professional efficacy. Bandura (1997) asserts that accomplishments closely link to self-efficacy, as successful experiences instill confidence in individuals. Therefore, their greater exposure to hands-on experiences and achievements in these advanced stages accounts for the higher perceptions of teaching efficacy observed among third- and fourth-year pre-service teachers. Similarly, Lev Vygotsky's Gradual Development Theory emphasizes that learning is inherently social and occurs within a zone of proximal development—the range where individuals can develop skills with appropriate support. Pre-service teachers build their professional competence by acquiring knowledge and experience as they progress through their studies. Mentoring, feedback, and practical learning opportunities are essential elements that contribute to this development. The cumulative effect of these experiences explains the increase in teaching efficacy with years of study. Vygotsky (1978) also highlights the importance of external support when acquiring new skills, suggesting that pre-service teachers who engage in internships and practical courses during their third and fourth-years benefit from increased self-

efficacy. These experiences provide them with the confidence and competence needed to succeed as future educators.

The findings indicate that pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching efficacy and attitudes toward national values have a significant impact on their ethnocultural competencies. The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that both variables significantly predicted ethnocultural competency. This finding highlights how important pre-service teachers' personal attitudes and beliefs are in determining their ethnocultural competency. Note that teaching efficacy significantly influenced ethnocultural competence, highlighting its crucial role in professional skill development. The literature supports the connection between teaching efficacy and professional development. For example, Lee, Patterson, and Vega (2011) found that pre-service teachers with higher self-efficacy had more positive attitudes toward the teaching profession. This suggests that as pre-service teachers develop greater confidence in their teaching abilities, their ethnocultural competencies also improve. Similarly, Metzger and Wu (2008) found that attitudes toward national values significantly correlated with perceptions of professional efficacy. These studies reinforce the idea that both teaching efficacy and national values play important roles in developing ethnocultural competence among future teachers. The R^2 value from the regression analysis indicates that teaching efficacy and attitudes toward national values explain approximately 5.4% of the variance in ethnocultural competence. While this percentage highlights their influence, it also suggests that other factors contribute to ethnocultural competence. However, among the two predictors, only teaching efficacy had a significant individual effect, emphasizing the need to focus on enhancing self-efficacy during teacher training programs. Strengthening pre-service teachers' confidence in their professional skills is thus essential for fostering both professional development and ethnocultural competence.

Conclusion And Recommendations

The study found that pre-service teachers demonstrated moderate levels of ethnocultural competencies and teaching efficacy perceptions. However, their attitudes toward national values were high and positive, indicating a strong overall adoption of national values. The sub-dimensions of ethnocultural competencies revealed gender differences, as female pre-service teachers demonstrated higher ethnocultural competence than their male counterparts, while the behavioral

sub-dimension of ethnocultural competence showed no significant gender difference. While there was no significant gender difference in attitudes toward national values, female pre-service teachers significantly rated their teaching efficacy higher than males. When examined by year of study, third- and fourth-year students exhibited higher ethnocultural competence than those in earlier years, suggesting that competence increases with experience and knowledge, though no significant difference appeared in the emotional and motivational sub-dimensions by year. Teaching efficacy perceptions also improved through the educational process, with third- and fourth-year students scoring higher. Attitudes toward national values remained consistent across all academic years, suggesting these values are deeply ingrained and unaffected by academic progression. In the end, multiple regression analysis showed that attitudes toward national values and teaching effectiveness together predicted ethnocultural competencies, explaining 5.4% of the variance. Teaching effectiveness had a bigger effect here.

Only students from pedagogical faculties at state universities in Kazakhstan make up the sample, which limits the generalizability of the results. This may restrict the generalizability of the findings for pre-service teachers across various cultural and educational contexts. Furthermore, the reliance on self-report scales for data collection may introduce subjective biases, as participants' self-perceptions of competence could influence the outcomes. The research data were analyzed based on limited variables, specifically gender and year of study; consequently, the influence of other demographic and socio-cultural factors on teacher efficacy and ethnocultural efficacy was overlooked. The study exclusively employed quantitative data collection methods, limiting the opportunity to gather in-depth qualitative information. This restriction may hinder a comprehensive understanding of preservice teachers' ethnocultural competencies and their attitudes toward national values.

The study's findings suggest several recommendations to improve pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies, attitudes towards national values, and perceptions of teaching competence. Training programs should incorporate specific modules on ethnocultural competencies to help pre-service teachers develop skills for effective communication with diverse cultural groups. Since female pre-service teachers demonstrated higher ethnocultural competence, gender-sensitive training programs should be introduced to address the needs of male pre-service teachers in this area. Lower-year students should have increased opportunities for internships,

fieldwork, and practical courses, given that upper-year pre-service teachers demonstrated stronger ethnocultural competencies, to help them gain relevant experience. Although no gender difference was observed in the behavioral dimension, workshops, simulations, and case studies should be conducted to further enhance behavioral competencies in cultural awareness.

Given the relationship between teaching efficacy and ethnocultural competencies, mentoring programs and self-assessment tools could be developed to strengthen pre-service teachers' professional self-efficacy. High levels of positive attitudes toward national values should be preserved, with course content that balances these values alongside modern educational methods to foster a well-rounded perspective. Male pre-service teachers should receive leadership training and teaching skills programs to improve their perceptions of teaching competence, given that female pre-service teachers reported higher teaching efficacy. Digital platforms and simulations could be utilized to create virtual intercultural experiences, promoting cross-cultural interaction among pre-service teachers. In upper-year courses, content focused on critical thinking and managing cultural diversity should be intensified to better prepare pre-service teachers for real-world challenges. Additionally, foreign exchange programs and collaborations with educators from other countries should be promoted, providing direct intercultural engagement opportunities to further develop pre-service teachers' ethnocultural competencies.

Researchers should conduct a thorough investigation of teacher training programs to enhance ethnocultural competencies. Researchers should conduct comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts to investigate the impact of ethnocultural awareness and communication skills on pre-service teachers. These studies may elucidate the impact of various cultural and educational frameworks on the development of ethnocultural competence in a more thorough manner. Furthermore, employing a blend of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods with larger samples is advisable to investigate the relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions of professional efficacy and teaching effectiveness in greater depth. Collecting in-depth data on the challenges faced by pre-service teachers in their teaching processes and their coping strategies can inform the development of effective intervention strategies aimed at enhancing their teaching efficacy. By examining methods to enhance or modify attitudes toward national values, researchers can formulate more substantiated recommendations for incorporating these values into educational

curricula. This may facilitate the development of a more effective teaching practice among pre-service teachers by integrating national and global values.

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