

# **Assessment of intercultural sensitivity types of healthcare students - A person-oriented approach**

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## **Abstract**

### Theoretical background

Intercultural sensitivity and empathy contribute to the quality of care in our increasingly diverse world and healthcare students especially need to develop these skills to provide effective and non-discriminatory services.

### Summary of work

As part of the Medically Unexplained Symptoms and Intercultural Communication Erasmus+ Project [1], our aim was to conduct status and developmental needs assessments on healthcare students' intercultural sensitivity (IS) and empathy. Through a person-oriented analysis, we targeted to identify student groups more in need of IS development and improve intercultural communication.

Data collection was carried out among international and local medical (n=356) and psychology (n=136) students in Hungary. The questionnaire included demographics, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) [2], and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index [3]. Latent Profile Analyses, a model-based clustering technique was used to identify subgroups with distinct profiles of IS.

### Results

With ISS subscales as indicator variables, a 4-cluster solution was selected: 'interculturally average' (n=241), 'interculturally uncertain' (n=76), 'interculturally sensitive' (n=132) and 'interculturally refusing' (n=54). The composition of each subgroup was different, and a multinomial logistic regression model revealed the gender, major, foreign language proficiency, and empathy as significant predictors.

### Discussion

Using an innovative analysis in IS, we could identify 2 student groups who seemed to be in greater need of IS improvement. In the 'interculturally uncertain' group, the focus should be more on developing confidence, foreign language skills, and intercultural experiences, while

in the 'interculturally refusing' group focus should be on empathy and perspective-taking, attentiveness, engagement, and respect.

### Conclusions and Implications for further practice

Recognizing the need and the appropriate directions for the development of intercultural competence is essential, both for research and education of healthcare students and practitioners. Our further developmental interventions can thus move towards more personalized educational opportunities, for which a supporting e-learning programme has been developed too.

### References (maximum three)

[1] MUSIC: Medical Education on Medically Unexplained Symptoms and Intercultural Communication Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Program

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[2] Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (2000). The development and validation of the intercultural sensitivity scale. *Human Communication*, 3, 3–14.

[3] Davis, M. H. (1980). A multidimensional approach to individual differences in empathy. *Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology*, 10, 85.