

---

## Impact of Intercultural Sensitivity and Intercultural Communication Apprehension on Ethnocentrism: A Select Study of HEI of India

---

**Megha Bhargava<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Aneesya Panicker<sup>2</sup>**

*1 Research Scholar, Institute of Business Management, GLA University, Mathura*

*2 Associate Professor, Institute of Business Management, GLA University, Mathura*

*Email: aneesya.panicker@gla.ac.in; panickeraneesya@gmail.com*

*Corresponding Author: megha.bhargava32@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

*In the global world where intercultural exchange of student group has become a common aspect wherein main cultures come in contact with each other in the journey of achieving motives like education, business jobs in global market etc. In such a scenario where people have to interact with diverse individuals they tend to treat their cultural norms and values superior to others. The existence of strong ethnocentrism does not allow smooth exchange of such values and culture.*

*This study is an effort to understand the role of Intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication apprehension on ethnocentric behavior of students of higher education institution (HEI) of India which receive a lot of foreign students every year to acquire higher education through various international schemes. The study will also identify the issues faced by students while interacting with the Indian students and students of different cultures in their day to day interaction while going through the journey of acquiring higher education.*

**Keywords:** *Intercultural sensitivity, Ethnocentrism, Intercultural communication apprehension, Indian context*

## **Introduction**

The world today has become a global village and has found a real change in the exchange of cultural values, education, business and dependency on each other to have a peaceful world. When there is such exchange of two different cultures the issue of ethnocentrism comes in picture. When two different cultures meet on a common platform like exchange of education, business etc. in the form of a student's travelling from one country to another in search of knowledge; ethnocentrism comes in picture. Many researchers who studied ethnocentrism in the real world consider it as a concept of in-group bias (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

The concept when incepted by Sumner in 1906 was purely a sociological construct which discussed conflicts between in-group and out group. According to him one group is considered as the center and others were rated. Every group consider itself superior with own pride and looks outsiders as strange. Each group has a tendency to consider his own culture and own group more prominent than the other group.

The objective of the current study is to understand the inter relationship between the variables intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, and intercultural communication apprehension. The study is an effort to understand the proposed relationship, specifically in Indian Context.

## **Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis formulation**

Many researchers have recommended that almost all the people have the tendency to consider their culture and social behaviour related to their culture as correct. They tend to have a perception of not accepting other cultures as good as their own (Brewer and Campbell, 1976; Sinkovics et al., 1994). Many researchers highlighted that when there is a high level of ethnocentrism it effects the intercultural communication adversely by developing a feeling of strong patriotic and nationalistic pride for one's own culture which tends to be a positive aspect. Wherein the same can also result into a negative aspect as this can also lead to less respect or no respect for other cultures leading to

a great communication gap and cultural value exchange developing intercultural communication apprehension (Wrench, et al., 2006; Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2007).

Further, many research findings show that ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension plays a vital role in understanding the personal behaviour of an individual while they interact with different culture oriented people. This also reflects the motivational aspects to have a better relationship with other cultural groups. Therefore, the study tries to understand the impact of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

### ***Ethnocentrism***

Ethnocentrism has been recently identified as judging other groups or culture as compared to one's own culture in terms of customs, language, and ethical behaviour (Ting-Toomey, 1999). (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997a) suggested that even though some degree of ethnocentrism is necessary for a culture to survive and stay alive yet when there is a higher level of ethnocentrism it will act as a hindrance for the exchange of communication and values between two different cultures. According to (Chen & Starosta, 2005) Ethnocentrism is a means to express one's own feeling about their own culture and have deep bondage with their group members. When two different cultural group members interact with other they judge and interpret each other in intercultural communication by keeping their own cultural criteria as dominant to the others.

Berger and Calabrese's (1975) stated that ICCA stops people from exploring a new culture and they bounds themselves within the boundaries of their own culture. Such people find it difficult to cope up with different group of people and keep on looking for a secured space for themselves only within their own group.

### ***Inter Cultural Communication Apprehension***

Whenever an individual interacts with people from other culture can lead to anxiety while communicating and according to Neuliep and McCroskey 1997b who coined the term intercultural

communication apprehension stated that it is a fear that a group develops or anticipate while interacting with different group of people with different culture. A scale on Personal report on intercultural communication apprehension (PRICA) was also developed by the researchers. According to Neuliep and Ryan 1998 Intercultural Communication Apprehension has a positive impact on uncertainty about the individuals feeling about interaction, uncertainty of future, and uncertainty about the behaviour of others. Further they observe a negative association with responsive and assertive communication behaviours.

Gudykunst and Kim (1997) suggested that individuals who belongs to different culture feel unfamiliar with other culture environment as a result they have an utmost level of eccentricity and little knowledge of other culture. Therefore, they feel apprehensive and find it difficult to easily adopt and get inclined to a new cultural environment. When there is a lack of communication, anxiety increases and there is always a hitch amongst two groups to communicate with each other. There is always a tendency to develop communication threat about other culture leading to development of misunderstanding and wrong interpretation about other cultural values as also suggested by other researchers (Croucher, 2013; Trawalter et al., 2012)

### ***Intercultural Sensitivity***

Chen (2005) stated that globalization made the world too small and people from different geographical regions, culture and religion have got an opportunity to come on a common platform. (Chen & Starosta, 1997) defined Intercultural sensitivity as the ability of an individual to understand and appreciate different cultures leading to develop emotions and appropriate behaviour while communicating with other group of people. According to Chen, 2009 intercultural sensitivity acts as a catalyst to decrease ethnocentrism and enhance Intercultural communication competence leading to intercultural awareness behavioural abilities to interact wisely with other group of culture.

Researcher like Bennett 1984 stated that intercultural sensitivity is a process of development

where an individual is able to transform from ethnocentric to ethno relative with ability to understand and accept other cultures. Intercultural sensitivity leads to develop positive emotions about people from other culture leading to higher degree of interaction, satisfaction and social orientation towards their counterparts (Gudykunst & Kim, 2002). Intercultural sensitivity develops positive emotions and willingness to respect, recognise and appreciate cultural difference during interactions with people from different culture. A sense of respect and acknowledgement could also be observed in a person with intercultural sensitivity leading to nurturing and image of global citizenship (Adler, 2008; Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Chen, 2005; Hawuk & Brislin, 1992).

Chen and Starosta (2000) stated that intercultural sensitivity plays a vital role for intercultural communication and consists of abilities like interaction attentiveness, interaction engagement, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, interaction attentiveness and respect for cultural differences and these are the primary dimension for intercultural sensitivity. Individuals who have a high level of intercultural sensitivity are found to have more attentive, and adjusting behaviour towards other culture they perceive the other cultural values with much ease and have a very good social cultural relationship with people from other groups (Chen and Starosta, 2000). Such people show a high self-monitoring, and self-esteemed. Such people have a more empathic behaviour towards others and interact in a better way with other group members. Intercultural sensitivity also leads to develop a two-way communication process further leading to a more empathetic interpersonal relationship with high self-esteem adjusted behaviour and self-monitoring with effective intercultural interaction (Chen and Starosta, 2000). According to the above literature the hypothesis for the study are as below:

### ***Hypotheses***

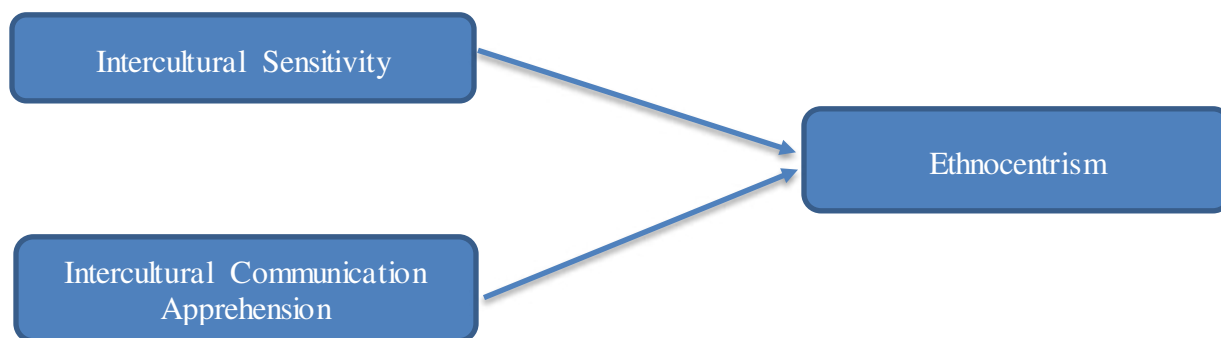
*H1: Intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism have significant negative relationship*

*H2: Intercultural Communication Apprehension and ethnocentrism have significant positive relationship*

*H3: Intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication apprehension have significant*

*negative relationship*

The conceptual model for the present study is highlighted in figure 1 below



**Figure: 1. Proposed Model**

### **Methodology**

#### ***Sample***

The sample size of the study was 102 college students from two higher education institutions located in India. Out of which one was a university and other was an Indian Institute of Technology. The age of the participants ranges from 18-35 years from different countries who have come to India for acquiring higher education through various sponsored agencies which includes ICCR India and QIP programs of their country of origin and had 23% Ethiopian, 44% Canadian, and 20% from UK.

#### ***Data Collection***

The data was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire through emails as well as in personal interaction in classes. The participants were informed and explained about the purpose of the study being the issues of ethnocentrism and intercultural issues faced by them while being in India.

#### ***Measurement***

Ethnocentrism Scale was taken as designed by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) developed a revised Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE) that was adopted for the study. This scale is designed to assess people's feelings regarding their culture. The 24 five-point Likert scale

statements include People in my culture could learn a lot from people in other cultures. Most people from other cultures just don't know what is good for them. I respect the values of other cultures. I respect the customs of other cultures. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture. The alpha reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.89.

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was adopted from Chen and Starosta's (2000). The scale has a 24 five-point Likert items. The ICS scale is designed to understand how an individual feel when they interact with people who belong to a different culture. The scale is inclusive of five sub-scales, interaction attentiveness, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction engagement and interaction enjoyment. This scale consists of 24 statements which have tried to capture more information on interaction of people with different culture, acceptance level of the opinions of people, Cultural distinctions. Whether or not different people have positive responses to counterparts while they interaction. The reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.88.

For Intercultural communication apprehension the rating scale or PRICA was adopted as designed by Neuliep and McCroskey, 1997b with an objective to measure the level of fear in people while they communicate. It comprises of fourteen questions, to be marked on five point Likert scales. The instrument aims to identify the level of anxiety and fear of the people when they interact with people from other culture. This 14 statement scale tries to understand the amount of nervousness, tension, involvement, engagement, faced by people, while there is an interaction between people from different cultures. The reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.78.

**Table 1. Internal Consistency of Scale**

Variable No.	Variables taken for the Study	Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
1	Ethnocentrism	0.89
2	Intercultural Sensitivity	0.88
3	Intercultural communication apprehension	0.78

*Source: Authors' Calculation*

**Data analysis**

To examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables regression analysis is administered, that helps to predict the level of variations independent variables bring on the dependent variable. Thus, in the present study, regression analysis helps to test whether Intercultural Sensitivity and Intercultural communication (independent variables) serve as significant indicator of ethnocentrism (dependent variable).

**Results**

Descriptive statistics reveals that there are no multi-collinearity issues among the dependent, and independent variables as the value of skewness and kurtosis ranges between acceptable level. The data set tends to be normal as the value of both skewness and kurtosis lays from -2 and +2 (George & Mallery, 2010). Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics summary.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Independent and Dependent Variables**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>
Ethnocentrism	1.00	5.00	3.23	0.91	-0.956	-0.041
Intercultural Sensitivity	1.00	5.00	3.31	0.94	-0.136	-0.593
Intercultural communication apprehension	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.05	0.063	-1.43

*Source: Authors' Calculation*

Correlation analysis was administered to identify the intercorrelation between three constructs intercultural communication sensitivity, ethnocentrism, and intercultural communication apprehension. The acceptable range of Pearson correlation coefficients is from -1 to +1. The results showcase that lower level of ethnocentrism predicted higher level of intercultural



sensitivity.

As predicted in hypothesis 2 a lower level of intercultural communication apprehension construct predicts a higher level of ethnocentrism which has been reflected by the mean value of intercultural communication apprehension being 1.3 as compared to the mean value of ethnocentrism which is very high being 2.9.

A statistically significantly negative correlation was found between Intercultural communication apprehension and intercultural sensitivity with ethnocentrism. The correlation analysis reveals statistically significant negative association between intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism (-0.39 at a 1% level of significance). Thus, hypothesis 1 is accepted. Further, there also exist positive association between intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism (0.42 at 1% level of significance), hypothesis 2 is accepted. There exist negative association between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication apprehension, thus hypothesis 3 is also accepted.

**Table 3. Correlation Analysis**

Variables	Ethnocentrism	Intercultural sensitivity	Intercultural apprehension	Communication
Ethnocentrism	1.00	-0.39**		0.42**
Intercultural sensitivity	-0.39**	1.00		-0.34**
Intercultural communication apprehension	0.42**	-0.34**		1.00

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Source: Authors' Calculations*

The result for regression analysis as in table 4 as below shows that, in the Model 1 (ICS-ETH), ethnocentrism as dependent variable and intercultural sensitivity as predictive variable is explaining 58% variance ( $F=239.49$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). In the Model 2 (ICCA-ETH), ethnocentrism as dependent variable and intercultural communication apprehension as predictive variable is explaining 60% variance ( $F=270.77$ ,  $p=0.00$ ).

**Table- 4 Regression Analysis and Model Summary**

Model	B-Coefficient	R	R Square	F- Value	P-Value
ICS-ETH	0.64	0.80	0.58	239.49	0.00
ICCA-ETH	0.56	0.76	0.60	270.77	0.00
Source: Authors' Calculation					
ICS- Intercultural Sensitivity					
ICCA- Intercultural Communication Apprehension					

*Source: Authors' Calculation*

## Discussion

The study aims to understand the impact of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication apprehension on ethnocentrism. The results showed that people who have a high level of intercultural sensitivity had lower level of ethnocentrism and their apprehensive in intercultural interaction also reduces. Intercultural sensitivity plays a very significant role in reducing the hindrance of communication and developing the competency of people to interact with each other even if they belong to different cultures. The result of the study is in line to the study of past researchers (Chen, 2010). The results further indicate a negative relationship between ICCA and ICS and reflected that more the apprehension less will be the desire of an individual to interact and understand the culture of people other than their own group as also suggested by other researchers (Tominaga et al., 2003).

The result further showed a reduction in the pre interpretation by the people and judgments about others on the basis of one's own cultural values when there in a strong intercultural sensitivity which results in people having a welcoming and open-minded ability to accept other cultural. These findings are in consistent with past researchers (Ma, 2005; Lin & Rancer, 2003; Toale & McCroskey, 2001). A strong intercultural sensitivity results into minimizing cultural difference and people's behaviour towards other culture changes with a sense of respect and start behaving

empathically thus develop a sense of appropriateness towards other cultural values thus developing an intercultural integration and multicultural work and study group.

The foreigner students in India feel a sense of integration due to their presence in India for learning and acquiring higher education from Indian universities and Institutions. It has also been observed that these organizations have developed language learning courses to teach Hindi, Chinese, and Japanese etc. as languages to be learned by both foreign and Indian students who study together in same class to achieve a common degree. Such integration of cultural knowledge results into faith and respect for the culture of two different groups thus reducing the intercultural communication apprehension. The results of the study are in line to the past study of (Bennett, M., 2017). The result also shows that the people who have a high level of ICCA shows less willingness to communicate with others and finds it difficult to adjust in other group of people with different culture.

The results of the current study emphasize strongly on the higher need of intercultural sensitivity to reduce ethnocentrism and ICCA in the globalizing society. The stronger the intercultural sensitivity the lesser will the ethnocentrism further reducing the ICCA and resulting into one groups openness to communicate and share their feelings with other group of people as also suggested by (Yang Lin & Rancer, S. A., 2003)

Ethnocentrism could also be considered as a two bladed sword which can be positive as well as negative where depending upon its level wherein a high level of ethnocentrism can be considered as an extreme love and patriotism towards one's own culture whereas the negative aspect of it will result into misperception and misunderstanding about other culture and therefore Institutions must make efforts to develop a more interactive and positive environment for different group of students from different cultures to know each other better as also suggested by (Lin and Rancer, 2003). Furthermore, it has also been perceived that when there is a high level of ethnocentrism it results in developing more and more cultural differences and frictions between two groups which

can be fierce to the extent of hatred and violence between two groups. Therefore, the Intercultural sensitivity needs to be enhanced and developed at all level by increasing the intercultural communication traits and ability to respect and foster acceptance of multiple cultures resulting in promotion of multiculturalism and reduction in ethnocentrism.

## References

1. Chen, G. M. (2010). The impact of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.
2. Keith, K. D. (2019). Ethnocentrism: Seeing the world from where we stand. *Cross-Cultural Psychology: Contemporary Themes and Perspectives*, 23-38.
3. Lin, Y., & Rancer, A. S. (2003). Ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, intercultural willingness-to-communicate, and intentions to participate in an intercultural dialogue program: Testing a proposed model. *Communication Research Reports*, 20(1), 62-72.
4. Turner, J. C., & Oakes, P. J. (1986). The significance of the social identity concept for social psychology with reference to individualism, interactionism and social influence. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(3), 237-252.
5. Brewer, M. B., & Campbell, D. T. (1976). Ethnocentrism and intergroup attitudes: East African evidence.
6. Sinkovics, R., & Holzmueller, H. (1994). Ethnocentrism. A key determinant in international corporate strategy formulation
7. Chung, L. C., & Ting-Toomey, S. (1999). Ethnic identity and relational expectations among Asian Americans. *Communication Research Reports*, 16(2), 157-166.
8. Neuliep, J. W., & McCroskey, J. C. (1997). The development of a US and generalized ethnocentrism scale. *Communication Research Reports*, 14(4), 385-398.

9. Fritz, W., Graf, A., Hentze, J., Möllenberg, A., & Chen, G. M. (2005). An examination of Chen and Starosta's model of intercultural sensitivity in Germany and United States.
10. Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (2000). The development and validation of the intercultural sensitivity scale.
11. Chen, Guo-Ming, and William J. Starosta. "The development and validation of the intercultural sensitivity scale." (2000).
12. Wrench, J. S., Corrigan, M. W., McCroskey, J. C., & Punyanunt-Carter, N. M. (2006). Religious fundamentalism and intercultural communication: The relationships among ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, religious fundamentalism, homonegativity, and tolerance for religious disagreements. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 35(1), 23-44.
13. Arasaratnam, L. A., & Banerjee, S. C. (2007). Ethnocentrism and sensation seeking as variables that influence intercultural contact-seeking behavior: A path analysis. *Communication Research Reports*, 24(4), 303-310.
14. Neuliep, J. W., & McCroskey, J. C. (1997). The development of intercultural and interethnic communication apprehension scales. *Communication research reports*, 14(2), 145-156.
15. Neuliep, J. W., & Ryan, D. J. (1998). The influence of intercultural communication apprehension and socio-communicative orientation on uncertainty reduction during initial cross-cultural interaction. *Communication Quarterly*, 46(1), 88-99.
16. Gudykunst, W. B., & Nishida, T. (1984). Individual and cultural influences on uncertainty reduction. *Communications Monographs*, 51(1), 23-36.
17. Neuliep, J. W., & McCroskey, J. C. (1997). The development of a US and generalized ethnocentrism scale. *Communication Research Reports*, 14(4), 385-398.

18. Croucher, S. M. (2013). Integrated threat theory and acceptance of immigrant assimilation: An analysis of Muslim immigration in Western Europe. *Communication Monographs*, 80(1), 46-62.
19. Trawalter, S., Hoffman, K. M., & Waytz, A. (2012). Racial bias in perceptions of others' pain. *PloS one*, 7(11), e48546.
20. Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (1997). Chinese conflict management and resolution: Overview and implications.
21. Chen, G. M. (2005). The impact of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.
22. Chen, G. M. (2010). The impact of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.
23. Chen, G. M. (1997). A review of the concept of intercultural sensitivity.
24. Kim, H. S. (2002). We talk, therefore we think? A cultural analysis of the effect of talking on thinking. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 83(4), 828.
25. Seely Brown, J., & Adler, R. P. (2008). Open education, the long tail, and learning 2.0. *Educause review*, 43(1), 16-20.
26. Bhawuk, D. P., & Brislin, R. (1992). The measurement of intercultural sensitivity using the concepts of individualism and collectivism. *International journal of intercultural relations*, 16(4), 413-436.
27. Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (2000). The development and validation of the intercultural sensitivity scale.
28. Neuliep, J. W., & McCroskey, J. C. (1997). The development of a US and generalized ethnocentrism scale. *Communication Research Reports*, 14(4), 385-398.

29. Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (2000). The development and validation of the intercultural sensitivity scale.
30. Neuliep, J. W., & McCroskey, J. C. (1997). The development of a US and generalized ethnocentrism scale. *Communication Research Reports*, 14(4), 385-398.
31. Chen, S., & Ravallion, M. (2010). The developing world is poorer than we thought, but no less successful in the fight against poverty. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 125(4), 1577-1625.
32. Yamanaka, A., Beuckmann, C. T., Willie, J. T., Hara, J., Tsujino, N., Mieda, M., ... & Sakurai, T. (2003). Hypothalamic orexin neurons regulate arousal according to energy balance in mice. *Neuron*, 38(5), 701-713.
33. Ma, W., Yang, C., Gong, X., Lee, K., & Heeger, A. J. (2005). Thermally stable, efficient polymer solar cells with nanoscale control of the interpenetrating network morphology. *Advanced functional materials*, 15(10), 1617-1622.
34. Lin, Y., & Rancer, A. S. (2003). Ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, intercultural willingness-to-communicate, and intentions to participate in an intercultural dialogue program: Testing a proposed model. *Communication Research Reports*, 20(1), 62-72.
35. Toale, M. C., & McCroskey, J. C. (2001). Ethnocentrism and trait communication apprehension as predictors of interethnic communication apprehension and use of relational maintenance strategies in interethnic communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 49(1), 70-83.
36. Liddelow, S. A., Guttenplan, K. A., Clarke, L. E., Bennett, F. C., Bohlen, C. J., Schirmer, L., ... & Barres, B. A. (2017). Neurotoxic reactive astrocytes are induced by activated microglia. *Nature*, 541(7638), 481-487.
37. Lin, Y., & Rancer, A. S. (2003). Ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension,

intercultural willingness-to-communicate, and intentions to participate in an intercultural dialogue program: Testing a proposed model. *Communication Research Reports*, 20(1), 62-72.

38. Dong, Q., Day, K. D., & Collaço, C. M. (2008). Overcoming ethnocentrism through developing intercultural communication sensitivity and multiculturalism. *Human Communication*, 11(1), 27-38.