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Analysis of Intercultural Communication Competencies in Prospective Primary School Teachers' Use of Internet Technologies

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It can be said that self-efficacy perceptions of using the Internet for intercultural communication purposes is a characteristic that can be developed by putting computer and Internet use skills into practice. Before starting the studies to improve this characteristic, there is a need for research to reveal the current situation. The purpose of this study is to examine the intercultural communication competencies and internet self-efficacy of prospective prospective primary school teachers in Kazakhstan in a relational way. In this study, since it is aimed to examine whether these two variables differ in terms of gender and professional seniority by examining the contribution of internet self-efficacy scores in predicting intercultural communication competence scores of teachers, a relational survey model with descriptive method was used. The research sample consists of prospective primary school teachers at two different universities, in which there are different campuses in Taldykorgan, Ural, Almaty and Semey in Kazakhstan in the 2022-2023 academic year. In this context, questionnaires were collected from 261 teachers through face-to-face questionnaires. According to the findings of the study, teachers' intercultural competence and Internet self-efficacy were found to be at a moderate level. Participant prospective teachers' intercultural competence and Internet self-efficacy differed in relation to gender and age. Finally, internet self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers significantly predicted their intercultural competence.

Introduction

The acquisition of intercultural competence was previously associated with foreign language/second language learning and teaching, but in the 21st century, the concept has been defined as a necessity and related to many fields such as linguistics, marketing, advertising, international relations, etc. Intercultural competence starts with cultural awareness and is realized through the acquisition of many competencies such as acquiring cultural knowledge, gaining communication and behavioral skills, coping with situations of cultural uncertainty, and developing cultural empathy. Acquiring intercultural competence leads to intercultural adaptation (Deardorff,

2008; Leung, Ang & Tan, 2014). It is seen that the concept of intercultural competence is handled as intercultural communication competence in many studies. However, instead of intercultural competence, intercultural communication, international communication, intercultural awareness, international ability, intercultural adaptation, intercultural interaction, intercultural sensitivity, etc. are also used (Fantini, 2006; Lustig, Koester & Halualani, 2006). When the concept of intercultural competence is considered as communication competence, it is perceived as a set of knowledge and skills related to both language and communication, whereas it was previously perceived only as a competence related to language and grammar knowledge. The focus of communication competence is the use of the knowledge and skills that are most appropriate for the situation/circumstance in a communication process (Seitenova et al., 2023; Salleh, 2008). Intercultural refers to the interaction between people from different cultures or multiple cultures (Koester & Lustig, 2015), while competence refers to the monitoring and observability of a person's performance (Fantini, 2005). In this context, Taylor (1994) defines intercultural competence as a person's possession of cultural knowledge and behavioral skills in order to understand and interact correctly with a different culture or a foreigner from a different culture.

The dynamic process in which people from different cultures interact to question and recognize their own and other cultures reflects the concept of "intercultural" (James, 2008). The concept of interculturality emphasizes the communication ability of people from different cultures in their interaction with each other. Although the definition of intercultural communication competence varies according to the fields of science and approaches to be studied, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) defined it as "the ability to effectively and appropriately manage the interaction between individuals with different cognitive, affective and behavioral adaptations". Likewise, Vilà (2010) defined it as "the behaviors of reconciling cultural meanings and maintaining effective communication". The intercultural communication model (Chen & Starosta, 2000) consists of three dimensions: intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness and finally intercultural resourcefulness, and the concept of intercultural sensitivity in the affective dimension, which refers to emotions, is accepted as a prerequisite for intercultural communication competence (Fritz, Mollenberg, & Chen, 2002).

The invasion of media and cultural industries on cultures is increasing day by day with the digitalization of communication. Media and cultural industries, controlled by multinational corporations, influence local cultures and their values, making intercultural communication an inevitable phenomenon (Nguyen et al., 2022; Sykes, 2017). While technology has enabled the reorganization of space and time in the new digital age (Ashraf et al., 2021; Banihashem et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2021; Koc & Tanrikulu, 2021; Oca & Herrera, 2021; Öztürket al., 2021), it has reduced the nature of locality in the flow of information, goods and services. As McLuhan & Povers (1989) put it, cultures are shaped by the way they communicate and an invention in communication technology leads to cultural change. Castells (2004) also emphasizes the importance of the role of communication tools in cultural transformation by stating that cultures are made up of communication processes. "Just like language itself, each medium gives a new orientation to thought, expression and sensitivity, leading to the emergence of a unique mode of discourse" (Postman, 2004, p. 19) In this context, the transmission of content at the speed of light creates a cultural revolution. In today's media system, there is a dual intertwining of simulation and text, image, language, music, tone and others in the digital. A new form of simultaneity and coexistence is emerging. The role of communication technologies shifts from reproduction and dissemination to a participatory relationship between

society and the new media industry that has nothing in common with the logic of regulatory media. The new structure of relationship and interaction changes the public's participation in hybrid media. The concepts of diversification and combination, on the one hand, create a discrete unity and, on the other hand, emphasize regular and continuous processes of harmony and mixing between cultures (Çaycı & Karagülle, 2016). In this framework, the impact of media technology, which is unified and hybridized in the process of globalization, on local social cultures with standardized mass media products contains a hybridizing feature on the one hand, and on the other hand, it also contains the potential to resist dominant cultures (Baraldi, 2006).

Primary school teachers need to ensure that national culture and universal culture complement and enhance each other and that their students see life and the world from the broadest perspective. Language and culture are like two complementary elements, two inseparable parts. Because the richness of language means the richness of culture. Therefore, if language is taught well, this will also manifest itself in the cultural field. For this reason, this study is considered important for primary school teachers to have competence in intercultural communication and to transfer these competencies to their students in the future (Alvarado-Caushi et al., 2022; Dusi, Rodorigo & Aristo, 2017; Turebayeva et al., 2020).

One of the elements that enable teachers to have intercultural experiences is the ability to use the Internet and related resources. The discipline of intercultural communication, which was founded in the mid-twentieth century, has become a rapidly developing field both in academia and in practice with the effect of globalization since the 1980s. The voluntary and compulsory human mobility that crosses the borders of countries has been the field of study of intercultural communication as the main reasons that lead individuals and groups from different cultures to compare and live together (Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Hernández-Bravo, Cardona-Moltó & Hernández-Bravo, 2017). Today, with the digitalization of communication, interactions between cultures are becoming more intense and complex. Forced mass migrations as a result of regional wars, intense mobility between countries, from higher education students to employees in international businesses, create the necessity for people with different cultural codes to live together more. On the other hand, even if people do not move geographically, online communication, which enables communication independent of time and space, makes the encounter of cultures inevitable. Therefore, internet technologies undoubtedly offer different dynamics in terms of intercultural communication focusing on communication barriers, problems and solutions. It seems unlikely that the concepts and theories that are based on examining the network of relationships based mostly on face-to-face communication will be sufficient to explain today's intercultural interactions. The intensive use of online communication tools both in daily habits and in the professional world necessitates a reevaluation of intercultural communication concepts and models. Digitalization, mobile technology and the development of social networks inevitably affect communication (Avgousti, 2018; Landau, Eisikovits, & Rafaeli, 2019).

It is known that there are intensive studies in the field of foreign language education on developing intercultural competencies through internet-based social networks. Vurdien (2014) states that in foreign language education, "social networks provide students with the opportunity to communicate with peers from different countries because the classroom environment is insufficient for learning a different culture". Wankel (2016) suggests the effective use of social media in intercultural education of employees. McEwan and Sobre-Denton (2011)

emphasize that online communities and social networks offer unique opportunities for intercultural communication. One of the opportunities offered by Internet technology is the use of social media in education and training. It makes sense to use social media as a tool for the development of intercultural knowledge, attitudes and behaviors in structured educational processes. On the other hand, more research is needed on the effects of individual use of social media for intercultural interactions. In order to develop the theoretical framework of intercultural communication in line with new media, it is emphasized that there is a need for theoretical development in at least four areas: "cultural theory, intercultural communication theories, the impact of language and culture on online intercultural communication, and the development of online learning environments" (Macfadyen Roche & Doff, 2004).

The training of administrators and teachers who will play a primary role in the adoption and implementation of new technologies is as important as equipping educational institutions with technological facilities. It is not adequate just to introduce technology to the staff who will put technologies into practice, so teachers should also gain the skills to organize learning activities by using technology and new teaching techniques (Absatova, Seitenova & Nurpeissova, 2016; Arslantaş, 2021; Percival & Ellington, 1988). With the widespread use of ICT tools in classrooms, the use of the Internet for educational purposes has also increased. Thus, access to information resources on the Web becomes easier and the use of these resources in education becomes widespread (Tiemo, Bribena, & Nwosu, 2011). At this point, especially the Internet can be used effectively in selecting and preparing instructional materials, accessing information, communicating outside the classroom, working collaboratively and developing communication skills (Malhotra, Dixit, & Uslay, 2002). These opportunities offered by the Internet to users also contribute to the effective use of ICT in education (Rogers & Finlayson, 2004). In this direction, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasized that the active use of ICT in all kinds of educational activities is both a necessity and an opportunity (UNESCO, 2009). In this direction, the Internet and ICT support the professional development of teachers in improving the quality of education and provide students with faster and more direct access to information in their learning processes (Kurebay et al., 2023; Lever-Duffy, McDonald, & Mizell, 2003; Peterson, Albaum, Munuera, & Cunningham, 2002).

Those who are in more frequent contact with each other thanks to the Internet become more critical consumers with the contribution of information systems. People also become more interconnected on a global scale. At the same time, internet technologies can be considered as contributing to global problems. Thanks to technology, students can stay in their home countries and connect with students in other countries and cultures. This provides a global perspective and prepares students for world citizenship (Gibson et al., 2008). Information technologies accelerate the spread of the globalization as well. The Internet and other ICT tools not only provide opportunities for development and growth among the countries of the world but also mediate the dissemination of information (Sarfó & Ansong-Gyimah, 2007).

Internet self-efficacy is related to many areas such as using new communication opportunities, participating in communities that serve a specific purpose on the Internet, forming similar groups, finding solutions to technical problems, searching, accessing and sharing information on the Internet (Glassman & Kang, 2010; Yi & Hwang, 2003; Schunk, 2000). In studies conducted by DeTure (2004), Thompson et al. (2002) and Joo et al. (2000), it is

stated that Internet self-efficacy positively affects individuals' motivation in online education and their online information seeking behaviors. In the studies conducted by Shi et al. (2011) and Livingstone and Helsper (2010), it is emphasized that individuals with low Internet self-efficacy have negative attitudes and lack confidence in participating in applications such as online information seeking.

The most powerful feature of the Internet is undoubtedly its use for communication. People in different places can carry out individual or group projects and exchange ideas ((Bargh, 2002; Liang & Wu, 2010; Stewart & Mann, 2000). The Internet is a set of resources established between two or more local or wide area networks that enables millions of sub-networks around the world to communicate with each other within a common protocol and share each other's resources. Internet self-efficacy can be defined as a person's belief in his/her abilities in applications such as accessing information, browsing, and researching on the Internet or in more complex issues such as solving problems encountered (Eastin & Labrosa, 2000; Tsai, et al., 2011). On the other hand, teachers' ability to use the Internet for communication and instructional purposes, their level in terms of information and communication technologies, how successful they are in solving the problems they encounter and their perceptions of the Internet are among the research topics that need to be clarified (Watson, 2006; Wu & Wang, 2015).

Considering the key role of the Internet for information and communication technologies (Kirschner & Wopereis, 2003), self-efficacy perceptions of using the Internet for educational purposes are important both in terms of cultural communication and teacher competencies. On the other hand, the increase in computer and Internet self-efficacy is directly proportional to the duration of individuals' experience with these skills (Brinkerhoff, 2006; Compeau & Higgins, 1995). In addition, it can be said that self-efficacy perceptions in using the Internet for cultural communication purposes is a characteristic that can be developed by putting computer and Internet use skills into practice. Before starting studies to develop this characteristic, there is a need for research to reveal the current situation. In this context, in this study, intercultural communication competencies and internet self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers were examined relationally in terms of some variables. In relation to this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought in the study:

- What is the level of intercultural communication competencies of prospective primary school teachers?
- Do prospective primary school teachers' intercultural communication competencies differ according to their gender and length of service in the profession?
- What is the level of internet self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers?
- Do prospective primary school teachers' internet self-efficacy differ according to their gender and age?
- Do prospective primary school teachers' internet self-efficacy predict intercultural communication competencies at a significant level?

Method

In this study, since it was aimed to examine the contribution of Internet self-efficacy scores in predicting intercultural communication competence scores of prospective teachers and to examine whether these two variables differ in terms of gender and age, a relational survey model with descriptive method was used. The dependent variable of the study was intercultural communication competence scores, while the independent

variables were socio-demographic variables such as internet self-efficacy, gender and age. The relational survey model is a research model that aims to determine the existence and/or degree of change between two or more variables together (Rea & Parker, 2014).

The population of the study consists of students (prospective primary school teachers) who are attending in 4 different cities (Taldykorgan, Ural, Almaty and Semey) in two universities in Kazakhstan in the academic year 2022-2023. The data were collected from 261 teachers through face-to-face questionnaires using simple randomization method. These prospective teachers are students who are studying in the educational program in "Pedagogy and Methods of Primary Education" of the Higher School of Pedagogy and Psychology of Zhetysu University (named after Ilyas Zhansugurov) and the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of the Kazakh National Pedagogical University (named after Abai). While administering the questionnaires, voluntary participation of the teachers was taken into consideration. 55.56% of the participants were female and 44.46% were male prospective teachers. Age between 18-19 years is 26.81%, between 20-21 years is 28.35% and 22 years or more is 44.44%.

Data Collection Tools

The research data were collected face-to-face with a questionnaire form by the researchers in the schools between 2022-2023 in approximately 20 minutes. The content of the questionnaire form consisted of 'Competence in Intercultural Communication Scale' and 'Internet Self-Efficacy Scale' as well as introductory questions for teachers.

Intercultural Communication Competence Scale

The validity and reliability study of the scale developed by Portalla and Chen (2010) into Kazakh was conducted by the researchers in 2022. The scale, which has a Likert-type system, is scored on a 5-point scale. The scale has 20 items with six dimensions. The lowest score that can be obtained from the whole scale is 20 and the highest score is 100. The sub-dimensions of the scale are as follows: behavioral flexibility, comfort in communication, respect in communication, message skills, management in communication and identity protection. A high score on the scale indicates that individuals have intercultural communication competence. In the validity and reliability study of the Kazakh form of this scale, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the sub-dimensions were found between 0.82 and 0.91.

Internet Self-Efficacy Scale

In the study, the "Internet Self-Efficacy Scale" developed by the researcher was used to determine teachers' self-efficacy towards the Internet. The scale consists of one dimension and ten items and has a 5-point Likert-type scale. This rating is in the form of "Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1)". Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis were conducted for the construct validity of the scale. Before factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was applied to determine the suitability of the sample size for factorization. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the KMO value was 0.91. In line with this

result, it was concluded that the sample size was "good enough" for factor analysis. In addition, when the results of Bartlett's test of sphericity were analyzed, it was determined that the chi-square value was significant ($p < .01$). The results showed that the sample was sufficient for factor analysis and the data were suitable for factor analysis (Yılmaz & Sünbül, 2009). As a result of the factor analysis, the explained variance of the one-factor scale was found to be 58.36%. Item factor loadings for each item of the Internet Self-Efficacy Scale ranged between .48 and .81. The item-total correlation for the eight items ranged between .56 and .81. For the reliability of the scale, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated based on the item analysis was calculated as .89.

Data Analysis

In the study, the distribution of the data obtained by calculating the skewness and kurtosis values of the intercultural communication competence and Internet self-efficacy scale scores of prospective primary school teachers were analyzed. According to the analysis, intercultural communication competence and internet self-efficacy scores of prospective primary school teachers in the research sample meet the assumptions of normal distribution. For the analysis of the data in the study, t-test was used to examine the change in teachers' daily internet usage hours, internet self-efficacy perceptions, intercultural communication competencies according to gender, and ANOVA was used to see the change according to age. The data were analyzed with SPSS 26.0 program and significance level was accepted as .05.

Findings

In the study, firstly, prospective teachers' self-efficacy towards the Internet and intercultural communication competence scale scores were analyzed descriptively (see Table 1 and Table 2). Then, t-test results for unrelated samples showing whether there is a difference in teachers' self-efficacy towards the Internet and intercultural communication competencies according to gender were included in the study (see Table 3 and Table 4). The F-test results of whether there is a difference according to the prospective teachers' age are given in Table 5 and Table 6. Finally, the effects of participant prospective teachers' Internet self-efficacy on their cultural communication competencies were tested with regression analysis (see Table 7).

Table 1. Descriptive Values of Prospective Primary School Teachers' Intercultural Communication Competence

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Flexibility in Behavior	261	1.50	5.00	2.84	0.49
Comfort in Communication	261	1.17	5.00	3.39	0.68
Respect in Communication	261	2.00	5.00	4.03	0.63
Message Skills	261	2.00	5.00	2.86	0.81
Management in Communication	261	2.00	5.00	3.20	0.49
Protection of Identity	261	1.86	5.00	3.71	1.00
Intercultural Communication Competence	261	2.61	4.64	3.34	0.33

When the table is examined, the mean scores of prospective primary school teachers in the subscales of the

intercultural communication competence scale are respectively 2.84 ± 0.49 in the 'flexibility in behavior' sub-dimension; 3.39 ± 0.68 in the 'comfort in communication' sub-dimension; 4.03 ± 0.63 in the 'respect in communication' sub-dimension; 2.86 ± 0.81 in the 'message skills' sub-dimension; 3.20 ± 0.49 in the 'management in communication' sub-dimension; 3.71 ± 0.49 in the 'protection of identity' sub-dimension. 0.3 ± 0.63 ; 2.86 ± 0.81 in the 'message skills' sub-dimension; 3.20 ± 0.49 in the 'management in communication' sub-dimension; 3.71 ± 1.00 in the 'protection of identity' sub-dimension and finally 3.34 ± 0.33 in the whole scale. According to the calculated mean scores, it is understood that prospective primary school teachers have a high level of respect and identity preservation tendencies in intercultural communication. However, it was found that prospective primary school teachers generally had a moderate level of intercultural communication competence.

Table 2. Descriptive Values of Internet Self-Efficacy Scores of Prospective Primary School Teachers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internet Self-Efficacy	261	2.00	5.00	3.13	0.62

When Table 2 is examined, it is understood that the mean Internet self-efficacy score of prospective primary school teachers was calculated as 3.13 ± 0.62 . The calculated mean score showed that the internet self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers was at a moderate level.

Table 3. Mean Intercultural Communication Competence Scores, Standard Deviations and t Test Results by Gender

	Gender					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Flexibility in Behavior	Female	145	2.79	0.47	-2.06	0.04
	Male	116	2.91	0.51		
Comfort in Communication	Female	145	3.45	0.67	1.46	0.14
	Male	116	3.32	0.70		
Respect in Communication	Female	145	4.02	0.65	-0.18	0.86
	Male	116	4.03	0.61		
Message Skills	Female	145	2.76	0.70	-2.29	0.02
	Male	116	2.98	0.92		
Management in Communication	Female	145	3.13	0.43	-2.89	0.00
	Male	116	3.30	0.54		
Protection of Identity	Female	145	3.74	1.07	0.63	0.53
	Male	116	3.66	0.92		
Intercultural Communication Competence	Female	145	3.31	0.31	-1.36	0.18
	Male	116	3.37	0.36		

When Table 3 is examined, no significant difference was found in the intercultural communication competence scale of primary school teachers' comfort in communication, respect in communication, protection of identity and total scores according to gender. In these dimensions and total scores, male and female teachers showed an equal distribution. However, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of flexibility in behavior, management

in communication and message skills depending on gender ($p < 0.05$). Male teachers who participated in the study had significantly higher mean scores in flexibility in behavior, management in communication and message skills.

Table 4. Internet Self-Efficacy Score Means, Standard Deviations and t Test Results by Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P
Internet Self-Efficacy	Female	145	3.04	0.63	-2.61	0.01
	Male	116	3.24	0.59		

Table 4 shows the results of the t-test analysis between the mean Internet self-efficacy scores of male and female prospective teachers. According to the analysis, the mean Internet self-efficacy score of female prospective teachers was 3.04 and that of their male colleagues was 3.04. The t value calculated between the mean scores of the two groups was 2.61. According to this finding, a significant difference was found between both genders in terms of internet self-efficacy. The mean Internet self-efficacy scores of male prospective teachers participating in the study were significantly higher.

Table 5. Mean Intercultural Communication Competence Scores, Standard Deviations and F Test Results According to Age

	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p
Flexibility in Behavior	18-19 Years	70	2.77	0.64	2.18	0.12
	20-21 Years	74	2.81	0.58		
	22 Years and over	117	2.91	0.26		
	Total	261	2.84	0.49		
Comfort in Communication	18-19 Years	70	3.46	0.59	0.64	0.53
	20-21 Years	74	3.34	0.76		
	22 Years and over	117	3.38	0.69		
	Total	261	3.39	0.68		
Respect in Communication	18-19 Years	70	3.92	0.62	1.58	0.21
	20-21 Years	74	4.03	0.59		
	22 Years and over	117	4.09	0.66		
	Total	261	4.03	0.63		
Message Skills	18-19 Years	70	3.19	1.05	9.51	0.00
	20-21 Years	74	2.84	0.94		
	22 Years and over	117	2.67	0.40		
	Total	261	2.86	0.81		
Management in Communication	18-19 Years	70	3.13	0.51	1.14	0.32
	20-21 Years	74	3.25	0.45		
	22 Years and over	117	3.22	0.50		
	Total	261	3.20	0.49		
Protection of Identity	18-19 Years	70	3.89	1.06	1.84	0.16

	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p
	20-21 Years	74	3.72	0.96		
	22 Years and over	117	3.60	0.99		
	Total	261	3.71	1.00		
Intercultural Communication Competence	18-19 Years	70	3.39	0.43	1.33	0.27
	20-21 Years	74	3.33	0.34		
	22 Years and over	117	3.31	0.26		
	Total	261	3.34	0.33		

In Table 5, prospective primary school teachers' intercultural communication competencies were compared according to their age. According to the F test analysis, there is a significant difference only in the mean scores of message skills ($p < 0.05$). According to the Scheffe test results, the mean score of message skills of prospective teachers with "18-19 years" age is significantly higher than that of prospective teachers with "22 years and over" age. However, no significant difference was found in the total mean scores of the intercultural communication competence scale and other sub-dimensions depending on age.

Table 6. Mean Internet Self-Efficacy Scores, Standard Deviations and F Test Results According to Length of Service in the Profession

	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Internet Self-Efficacy	18-19 Years	70	3.35	0.66	13.50	0.00
	20-21 Years	74	3.24	0.69		
	22 Years and over	117	2.92	0.47		
	Total	261	3.13	0.62		

In Table 6, prospective primary school teachers' internet self-efficacy was compared according to their working hours in their profession. According to the F test analysis, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of internet self-efficacy depending on age ($p < 0.05$). According to the Scheffe test results, the mean Internet self-efficacy score of prospective teachers with "18-19 years" age is significantly higher than that of teachers in the "22 years and over" age group.

Table 7. Regression Analysis Results to Determine the Effect of Internet Self-Efficacy on Intercultural Communication Competence

Variable	B	Standard Error	B	t	P
(Constant)	2.649	0.097		27.203	0.000
Internet Self-Efficacy	0.220	0.031	0.409	7.216	0.000

R=0.41; R²=0.17; F= 52.08; p<0.05

When Table 7 is examined, it is understood that there is a moderate, positive and significant relationship between Internet self-efficacy scores and intercultural communication competence scores of teachers ($\beta = 0.41$; $p < 0.01$). Internet self-efficacy explained 17% of the change in intercultural communication competence ($R^2 = 0.17$;

F=52.08; $p<0.001$). Internet self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers positively affects their intercultural communication competence ($p<0.01$).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, intercultural communication competencies and Internet use self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers in Kazakhstan were examined with a relational approach. According to the first finding of the study, it was found that prospective primary school teachers' respect and identity preservation tendencies in intercultural communication were at a high level, whereas their intercultural communication competence was at a medium level. According to the findings of the study, the first and most important factor affecting intercultural communication competence was found to be 'Respect for Cultural Differences and Preservation of Identity'. In other words, prospective primary school teachers who participated in the survey stated that they respect the values of people from other cultures, enjoy interacting with people from different cultures, like to be with people from different cultures, and are sensitive to the protection of the values and cultural identity of their own culture. In addition, intercultural communication competencies of prospective primary school teachers showed significant differences according to their gender and age. A significant difference was found in the mean scores of flexibility in behavior, management in communication and message skills in intercultural communication depending on gender. Male prospective teachers who participated in the study had higher behavioral flexibility, communication management and message skills than their female peers. In terms of intercultural communication, young prospective teachers with low class were found to have higher competence than their senior and older peers. The role of the teacher in intercultural learning has increased. Intercultural Education and multicultural settings are now considered as one of the important building blocks of foreign language teacher education and professional development (Kelly et al., 2004). According to another view, intercultural communication should be systematically developed at all stages of teacher education, including pre-service university education, internship practice and on-the-job training, and thus should be recognized as a motto for lifelong learning (Zydati, 1998). Classroom teachers are expected to be individuals who have gained the habit of multidimensional thinking, behavior and cultural richness in an environment where two cultures are brought side by side, who can approach the foreigner with tolerance and respect, who are aware of their own culture, but who can evaluate this culture from a broad perspective, in other words, who can make evaluations between two cultures without prejudice, and who have adopted the principle of intercultural communication (Banos, 2006; Fretheim, 1997). In this context, it is within the expectation that Kazakh prospective primary school teachers have high averages especially in terms of respect and preservation of identity in cultural communication. In the acquisition of intercultural competence, it is transferred to students through teachers and social awareness is created. Seeing and accepting differences as richness without marginalization and keeping them alive can only be realized through individuals with this education. Avoiding social conflict and living together in peace can only be achieved through intercultural communication and sensitivity. Educational institutions have duties and responsibilities as one of the important means of keeping this alive. In this context, the findings of this study, which was conducted to examine the intercultural communication competencies of primary school teachers in terms of various variables, are quite meaningful. When the studies examining the effect of gender variable on intercultural sensitivity level in the literature are examined, it can be said that the results of the research are in parallel with many studies; it can also

be seen in the results of other studies that there is no significant relationship between gender variable and intercultural sensitivity level. For example; in the study conducted by Bayles (2009), gender variable does not create a statistically significant difference. In the study conducted by Hammer, Bennett, and Wisemann (2003), although there was a difference in favor of men in intercultural sensitivity level, no statistically significant difference was found. In this study, a significant relationship was found between teachers' professional seniority and cultural communication competence. Younger prospective teachers have higher cultural communication competencies. In this context, it can be emphasized that young prospective teachers with high intercultural sensitivity are teachers who take individual and cultural differences into consideration and take care to create appropriate teaching and learning experiences.

Another variable addressed in the study is the Internet self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers. In the study, the internet self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers was found to be at a medium level. As it is known, in today's learning lives, teachers encounter and communicate with students and educational stakeholders who use technological tools such as cell phones, computers, videos and CDs every day. Therefore, if they do not improve their skills in using these technologies, they will have problems (Reiner, 2009). According to the findings of this study, especially female prospective teachers have low Internet self-efficacy compared to their male peers. Again, prospective teachers with older age were found to have low Internet self-efficacy. In the approach that expresses the difference between men and women's competencies in the use of internet technologies, it is seen that men had higher technology competencies than women in the 1990s. One of the reasons for this is the weak self-efficacy levels of women in using modern technologies (Whitley, 1997). Considering the 2010s, it is seen that the technological gender gap continues (Lau, & Yuen, 2015). In their study, Zhao, Lu, Huang, and Wang (2010) state that self-efficacy is an important determinant of the gender gap in digital technologies. It is concluded that female teachers' technology (internet) self-efficacy is lower than male teachers. As Alrajhi et al. (2017) emphasized in their study, gender and professional experience can be determinants of self-efficacy, especially in terms of technology use.

In the last finding of the study, the relationship between participant prospective primary school teachers' intercultural communication competencies and their internet self-efficacy was examined. According to the findings of the study, internet self-efficacy of prospective primary school teachers positively and strongly affects their intercultural communication competencies. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there is an increase in the number of studies examining intercultural studies within the scope of new media. McEwan and Sobredenton (2011) emphasize that online communities and social networks on the Internet offer unique opportunities for intercultural communication. Internet self-efficacy can be evaluated in many areas ranging from being able to use new communication opportunities, joining communities that serve a specific purpose on the Internet, forming similar groups and finding solutions to technical problems (Glassman & Kang, 2010). Individuals with strong Internet self-efficacy are able to distinguish quality, reliable information on the Internet and bring together different sources of information, and in terms of communication, they are able to realize a high level of effective communication through various networks (Kim & Glassman, 2013). In addition, there are also studies showing that individuals with low Internet self-efficacy experience anxiety and lack confidence in participating in interpersonal interactions and online applications (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010; Shi, Chen & Tian, 2011). Coffey

et al. (2013) tested the intercultural sensitivity scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) in the internet environment and found that individuals showed a higher level of intercultural sensitivity in three-dimensional virtual environment than in restricted websites. Sawyer and Chen (2012) argue that as a result of the relationships established through the internet, individuals overcome intercultural adaptation problems and this creates a sense of community. Social networks on the Internet emerge as environments where intercultural relationships are established, information is shared and a sense of community is built to cope with intercultural problems that may be encountered in real life. In this respect, it can be stated that prospective teachers who use online communication platforms effectively and have high self-efficacy in these issues exhibit strong intercultural communication self-efficacy.

In conclusion, based on the findings obtained from the sample of prospective primary school teachers, a strong relationship between Internet self-efficacy and intercultural communication competence can be mentioned. We can say that gender and professional seniority of teachers are important factors in terms of intercultural communication and internet self-efficacy. In future studies, the effect of different variables on intercultural communication and internet self-efficacy can be examined with or without gender and professional seniority variables. The studies in the literature mainly contain quantitative data. Views and attitudes towards intercultural competence and internet self-efficacy can be determined through qualitative methods. Further studies can be conducted in which the relationships between intercultural communication competence and internet self-efficacy are examined in depth, and training programs that will contribute to the development of intercultural communication competence can be organized based on the findings obtained.

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