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Article

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THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE ON WORK PRODUCTIVITY OF VOLUNTEERS IN RESPECT TO AGE AND LENGTH IN VOLUNTEERING

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of emotional intelligence and intercultural competence on the effectiveness of volunteer work with respect to the age and length of volunteering. 174 volunteers who have volunteered or are volunteering under the Erasmus + European Voluntary Service participated in the survey. The results of the study are presented as answers to the following problematic questions: Does higher emotional intelligence and higher intercultural competence increase the effectiveness of volunteer work? Does intercultural competence increase due to higher emotional intelligence? Do older volunteers have higher intercultural competence and higher emotional intelligence? Do volunteers with greater volunteering experience have higher intercultural competence and emotional intelligence? Do people with longer volunteering experience at the European Voluntary Service (EVS) have a higher level of intercultural competence and emotional intelligence? Based on the results of the study, factors that have a significant impact on the productivity of internationally active volunteers were identified.

Keywords: volunteer, volunteering, emotional intelligence, intercultural competence, work productivity.

JEL Classification: M12, M14, M19.

Introduction

Although various studies provide considerable evidence of the benefits of volunteering to the volunteer himself/herself and to organizations and society (e.g., McGhee, Santos, 2005; Hudson, Inkson, 2006; Waikayi et al., 2012; Guerra et al., 2012; Lee & Won, 2018; etc.), sometimes organizations tend to limit volunteer recruitment and the productivity of volunteering as ambiguous. For example, Handy and Srinivasan (2005) challenge the assumption that organizations seek to harness the full potential of volunteers available to them. According to the authors, factors such as lower productivity/performance may reduce the need for volunteers. It should be noted that this study did not assess volunteers' emotional intelligence and intercultural competence or their impact on volunteering productivity, and therefore, the lack of such studies remains quite difficult to unambiguously answer questions about interrelation among volunteering experience, intercultural competence, emotional intelligence, and productivity of volunteering. *On one hand*, volunteering for a young person is a tool to gain useful experience, enhance job skills, and

thus to add to their resume (Briggs, Peterson, & Gregory, 2010; Handy et al., 2010; Mangold, 2012; Pantea, 2012). That is, the volunteer develops personal competencies for both egoistic and altruistic purposes (Dekker & Halman, 2003; Handy et al., 2010; Bocsi, Fenyes, & Markos, 2017). Skills are acquired through practice as volunteering involves a wide variety of situations that enable the individual to understand one's own boundaries, to discover certain abilities, or to reinforce one's existing skills (Fee & Gray, 2011; Mangold, 2012; Pantea, 2012). In addition, reflection is often an integral part of this activity allowing one to delve deeper into what is being done, how it is being done, what its consequences are, and what could be done differently (Mangold, 2012), especially since foreigners may experience discrimination (Dajnoki et al., 2017). By learning to understand what is happening, a volunteer develops skills, learns how to manage emotions, and develops a real behavioural model because, according to Fee and Gray (2011), personal development is identified as one of the most important outcomes of volunteering. *On the other hand*, personal development is inseparable from having developed emotional intelligence; people are able

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to establish good relationships with those around them and to develop stronger relationships with others (Goleman, 1995). Such outcomes should be important for volunteers especially in the social sphere, but there is a lack of such research although some studies indirectly show that volunteering experiences are related to emotional and social skills (Lee & Won, 2018); furthermore, age influences both volunteer motivation to excel and motivation to self-educate (Oh, 2017); furthermore, intercultural experience is acquired (Bocsi et al., 2017) which is needed when working with different cultural groups. However, does this mean that developmental processes are unequivocally dependent on the age of the volunteer, the duration of volunteering to achieve intercultural competence, and the development of emotional intelligence that influence the effectiveness of the volunteer's work?

The aim of this study, therefore, is to assess the impact of emotional intelligence and intercultural competences on the effectiveness of volunteer work, taking into account the age of volunteers and the length of volunteering.

The study raised the following *problematic questions*: (1) is the effectiveness of volunteer work higher in the presence of higher emotional intelligence and higher intercultural competence? (2) In case of higher emotional intelligence, is the intercultural competence also higher? (3) Do older volunteers have higher intercultural competences and higher emotional intelligence? (4) Is there a higher degree of intercultural competence and emotional intelligence for volunteers with higher volunteering experience? (5) Do the volunteers in the European Volunteer Service (EVS) project have higher intercultural competence and higher emotional intelligence?

1. Theoretical background

Emotional intelligence. Chen and Nakazawa (2017) note that despite a wave of studies on emotions, which began several decades ago, the role of emotions in non-profit organizations is still insufficiently revealed. Nor is there abundant research analysing the influence of emotional intelligence on volunteering. The concept of emotional intelligence began to be formed only at the end of the 20th century when psychologists drew their attention to the interactions between emotions and thoughts and realized that this could affect the understanding, expression, and control of human emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The discovery of this interaction prompted a change in people's understanding about thinking and emotions, and how they interact with one another (Vratskikh et al., 2016). According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is the human's ability to practically manage emotional skills. Each person has a different level of abilities; therefore, when assessing emotional intelligence different dimensions are taken into account. Mayer and Salovey (1997) presented the four branch model of emotional intelligence. It summarized the following abilities (Christie, Jordan, & Troth, 2015): perceiving emotions, using

emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Two more models have been distinguished to help analyse and interpret emotional intelligence (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011): the skills model and the mixed emotional intelligence model. The first defines the emotional intelligence as standard intelligence, which is seen as a mental ability. The second model takes into account not only skills, but also the characteristics and competencies of the human personality such as optimism, self-esteem, or autonomy.

In addition to the fact that emotional intelligence is associated with emotional/mental health, which is inherent in the overall quality of life (Branscum, Bhochhibhoya, & Sharma, 2014), several authors (Plagnol & Huppert, 2010; Benenson & Stagg, 2015; Kamerade & Bennett, 2017) argue that volunteering itself contributes to the improvement of mental health. In addition, the relationship between emotional intelligence and person's work and quality of work has been noted. For example, Goleman (1995) has linked emotional intelligence to the motivation of the employees to achieve goals, the research results of Mandell and Pherwani (2003) showed a connection to the effectiveness of the manager's work, Koman and Wolff (2008) stressed the impact on the effectiveness of leadership to increase overall performance of the team, while Kunnanatt (2008) established a direct link with employee productivity and career progression.

Intercultural competence. Although the precise definition of what constitutes intercultural competence is quite complicated, it is often referred to as the ability to adequately and appropriately respond to cultural diversity (Cai, 2016; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Schnabel et al., 2015; etc.). Samovar and Porter (1997) claim that intercultural competence is a set of components that include knowledge, skills, properties, and attitudes that influence cognitive and behavioural processes in the intercultural environment. The study conducted by Palacios (2010) on young Westerners' participation in projects of volunteer tourism that are conducted in developing countries emphasizes the need to evaluate students' real abilities in order to avoid the negative consequences of assessing volunteering activities; therefore, advance intercultural training is essential for preparation of volunteers to work abroad in the future (Jackson & Adarlo, 2016). This supports the trends identified in the previous study. After interviewing Japanese students who joined and who did not join international projects, it was observed that those who had a high level of intercultural competence prior to participating in the project expanded this competency through volunteering experience unlike those who did not participate in the projects (Yashima, 2009). The results of another study conducted in Romania (Petre, Tomozii, & Bularca, 2011) show that volunteering programs make people more responsible, tolerant, adaptive, self-confident and flexible, volunteers develop their skills in the chosen field of activity. In other words, the intercultural competency acquired before going abroad can encourage its further

growth. Summarizing various authors' (Thomas, Elron, & Stahl, 2008; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006; D. C. Kayes, A. B. Kayes, Yamazaki, 2005; etc.) thoughts, the following key elements can be distinguished: attitude, awareness, knowledge, and skills/behavior. The components of intercultural competences are presented in Table 1.

Labour productivity. Although employers do not recognise volunteering as real work experience (Slootjes & Kampen, 2017), Zamora et al. (2019) found that former medical staff volunteers worked significantly more efficiently, and this is related to the experience gained during volunteering. At the same time, the authors acknowledge the lack of research in this area. Several other studies show that labour productivity depends on both external and personal factors such as professional environment, learning (Koopman et al., 2002), physical health (Witt et al., 2016), and mental and emotional state (Tischler, Biberman, & McKeage, 2002). Johari, Tan, and Zulkarnain (2018) distinguishes several more aspects that can affect the productivity of work: life-work balance, workload, and autonomy. Furthermore, arguments exist suggesting that a culturally diverse workforce may be more productive

(Jyoti & Kour, 2017): positive emotions are associated with greater engagement and productivity (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2017) while tension and conflicts reduce productivity and efficiency (Jackson & Joshi, 2004). Several studies link work productivity with intercultural competence and emotional intelligence. Terry (2007) draws attention to how productivity is linked to cultural differences regarding the quality of communication in the workplace, highlighting the importance of intercultural competence. According to Kunnanatt (2008), emotional intelligence could contribute to the productivity of employees as much as to the career opportunities in the organization could. Tischler et al. (2002) proposed the impact of individual emotional intelligence components on work productivity. For example, with higher self-confidence, higher productivity is noted. In addition, people who are able to manage themselves and are honest also work more productively. In this context, the research of Devonish (2016) suggests that a good psychological state has a strong relationship with emotional intelligence and work performance. The author argues that a healthy psychosocial environment at work is one of the most essential elements aiding in increased productivity in the workplace.

Table 1. The components of intercultural competences

Competence, required abilities, skills, knowledge	Sources
Intellectual abilities and their management	
Knowledge of foreign languages	Byram (1991, 1997), Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Terry (2007), Dusi, Messetti, and Steinbach (2014), Hemberg and Vilander (2017), Kenesei and Stier (2017), Lokkesmoe, Kuchinke, and Ardichvili (2016), Abduh and Rosmaladewi (2018), Zelenková and Hanesová (2019), Sándorová (2019), etc.
Cultural and managerial awareness of one's own culture	Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Dusi, Messetti, and Steinbach (2014), Cai (2016), etc.
General knowledge about cultural and managerial awareness of other countries	Matveev and Milner (2004), Tan et al. (2005), Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Lloyd and Hartel (2010), Migliore (2011), etc.
Desire to learn and excel	Monthienvichienchai et al. (2002), Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), etc.
Interpersonal skills	
Communication competence	Byram (1991, 1997), Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Jyoti and Kour (2015), Alekseeva et al. (2019), Sándorová (2019), etc.
Tolerance to diversity (for example: ethnic, national, religious tolerance)	Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Cai (2016), Gierke et al. (2018), Aguilar (2018), Alekseeva et al. (2019), etc.
Flexibility and adaptation	
Ability to apply knowledge in particular situations	Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Abbe, Gulick, and Herman (2007), Ponterotto (2010), etc.
Flexible adaptation to environment	Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Ponterotto (2010), Jyoti and Kour (2017), Kenesei and Stier (2017), etc.
Attention to others	
Finding solutions to problems related to intercultural communication within organisation	Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Lloyd and Hartel (2010), etc.
Staff development in the intercultural context	Matveev and Milner (2004), Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005), Lloyd and Hartel (2010), Jyoti and Kour (2017), etc.

Note: supplemented by authors under Petkevičiūtė and Budaitė (2005).

2. Methodology

The theoretical part of the study was based on the selection of research published in the Web of Science Core Collection (Clarivate Analytics), Scopus, and other databases using scientific literature analysis, synthesis, and read-across methods. Abstraction and comparative methods of analysis were applied. The questionnaire used for the survey consisted of the following scales: Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) (Shutte et al., 1998; Lane et al., 2009), Cross-Cultural Orientation Inventory (CCOI) (Mittal, 2012), Munroe Multicultural Attitude Scale Questionnaire (MASQUE) (Munroe & Pearson, 2006), Assessing Intercultural Competence-A Research Project of the Federation EIL (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006), and Stanford Presenteeism Scale (SPS) (Turpin et al., 2004). In the survey, the psychometric characteristics of the combined scales have been calculated indicating that the questionnaire's coefficients satisfy the requirements, and the questionnaire is suitable for measuring the target population (Table 2).

Questionnaires were placed on an electronic platform as surveys. A list of both Lithuanian and foreign organizations with which the "Actio Catholica Patria" has worked and plans to work in the future was compiled, and the organizations were asked to share the survey with their volunteers. The questionnaire link was sent by e-mail directly to the volunteers as well as to the organization representatives who are working directly with the EST volunteers asking them to share links with their volunteers with whom they have worked. Access to the survey was limited, i.e. only those individuals who were sent a survey link were involved in the study. Online survey was chosen

for reliability and fast and efficient processing because the participants live in different countries across Europe.

3. Results

174 volunteers who have been volunteering under the Erasmus + "European Voluntary Service" programme participated in the survey. The distribution of the participants according to sociodemographic characteristics (age, education, ethnicity, length of volunteering, length of volunteering in the EST project, volunteering country, and volunteering type) is presented in Table 2. The results in Table 2 reveal that young people who get involved in the EST project have already received higher education (60.1%). 18.4% participated in the project after graduating from high school – it can be assumed that this group of volunteers is searching for answers who they are or what activities they can relate to and might associate their lives with. One fifth of the survey participants work in different spheres of volunteering; the most popular area of volunteering is social, but the social sphere is very broad. Most frequently selected target groups in this area can be distinguished, i.e. youth (32%), children (24%), people with disabilities (14%) and elderly people (6%) (Table 3).

In order to answer the problem question "is the effectiveness of volunteer work higher in the presence of higher emotional intelligence and higher intercultural competence?" the Mann-Whitney U criterion was used to calculate survey results. The calculated results show that in the case of higher emotional intelligence and higher intercultural competence, the effectiveness of work is significantly higher than when the intercultural competence

Table 2. The structure and psychometric characteristics of the questionnaire (N min = 174; N max = 174 of 174)

Scales and subscales		Clarified percent	Cronbach alpha	Spearman-Brown	Factorial weight (L)			Correlation of Unit totality (r/itt)		
					mean	min	max	mean	min	max
Intercultural competence (IC)	Attitude	49.13	0.62	–	0.67	0.34	0.87	0.45	0.03	0.75
	Awareness	42.40	0.75	–	0.62	0.34	0.83	0.38	0.08	0.74
	Know	48.03	0.84	0.83	0.69	0.36	0.85	0.53	0.26	0.78
	Care	46.19	0.75	0.66	0.66	0.41	0.85	0.42	0.05	0.78
	Act	40.69	0.65	0.60	0.62	0.34	0.77	0.47	0.13	0.76
	Knowledge	39.81	0.81	0.79	0.63	0.58	0.68	0.38	0.15	0.66
	Intercultural Abilities – Attitude	46.84	0.89	0.81	0.68	0.57	0.77	0.46	0.21	0.75
Emotional intelligence (EI)	Appraisal of others' emotions	36.22	0.68	0.67	0.58	0.33	0.79	0.43	0.13	0.72
	Appraisal of own emotions	49.20	0.73	0.60	0.69	0.52	0.85	0.47	0.18	0.81
	Regulation	31.36	0.69	0.60	0.55	0.34	0.66	0.28	0.04	0.62
	Social skills	42.97	0.66	0.61	0.64	0.46	0.82	0.40	0.13	0.73
	Utilization of emotions	31.88	0.77	0.69	0.55	0.40	0.73	0.32	0.04	0.69
	Optimism	44.15	0.78	–	0.66	0.56	0.80	0.41	0.10	0.76
Work productivity	Stanford Presenteeism Scale	60.29	0.87	0.83	0.78	0.71	0.83	0.59	0.36	0.82

is lower. It should be noted that these findings are most pronounced when the emotional intelligence is higher because only then statistically significant differences are recorded. Regardless of the lower or higher intercultural competence, in the case of higher emotional intelligence, the effectiveness of work is significantly higher than when the emotional intelligence is lower (statistically significant differences are captured). In other words, it can be assumed that in the case of higher emotional intelligence and higher intercultural competence, higher efficiency indicators in volunteers (Table 4) may also be expected.

Table 5 reveals calculated survey results using the Mann–Whitney U criterion to answer the question “in

case of higher emotional intelligence, is the intercultural competence also higher?”

It has been found that intercultural competence as a whole as well as its components receive higher values among people with higher emotional intelligence. Statistically significant differences can be observed between people with lower and higher emotional intelligence in all sub-scales of intercultural competence, although they are ambiguous (e.g. the smallest differences obtained in *know* and *act* Subscales). This shows that higher emotional intelligence positively affects intercultural competence. Since emotional intelligence is an affective phenomenon, its development can also positively affect the level of intercultural competence.

Table 3. Participants' distribution by sociodemographic and other characteristics

Participants' characteristics			%	Participants' characteristics			%
Age	18–25 year old		56.3	Duration of volunteering	Up to 1 year		49.3
	26 and older		43.7		Over 1 year		50.7
Education	Secondary		18.4	Duration of volunteering in EST project	1–6 months		21.1
	Professional		5.2		7–9 months		18.7
	Unfinished higher		16.3		10–11 months		28.5
	Higher		60.1		12 months		31.7
Nationality	Lithuanians		39.8	Country of volunteering	Lithuania		22
	Volunteers of other nationalities*		60.2		Other countries**		78

Notes: * Austrians (8.6%), French (8.6%), Russians (6.3%), Germans (5.5%), Ukrainians (4.7%), Spanish (3.1%), Italians (3.1%) and others (20.3%);

** France (9.8%), Spain (6.5%), Poland (4.9%), Estonia (4.9%), Bulgaria (4.9%), Germany (4.1%), Italy (4.1%) and others (38.8%).

*** Volunteering type: Social (49.3%), Ecological (8.5%), Cultural (11.5%), Education (7.7%), Citizenship (1.5%), Mixed (21.5%).

Table 4. Interdependencies between volunteers' emotional intelligence, intercultural competences, and work efficiency

Emotional Intelligence	Categories	Lower intercultural competence		Value of statistical significance, p	Higher intercultural competence		Value of statistical significance, p	WE (work efficiencies) Rank averages		Value of statistical significance, p
		N	WE (work efficiency) Rank averages		N	WE (work efficiency) Rank averages		Lower intercultural competence (N = 87)	Higher intercultural competence (N = 87)	
Appraisal of others emotions	L	58	39.5	0.18*	39	38.8	0.085	44.6	55.5	0.063
	H	29	53.1		48	48.2		32.6	42.9	0.050*
Appraisal of own emotions	L	43	37.2	0.13*	30	31.6	0.001**	35.4	39.3	0.446
	H	44	50.6		57	50.5		40.9	58.8	0.002**
Regulation	L	45	37.6	0.14*	35	33.0	0.001**	37.6	44.2	0.204
	H	42	50.9		52	51.4		37.6	55.5	0.002**
Social skills	L	59	40.5	0.062	36	35.7	0.010**	45.1	52.7	0.195
	H	28	51.3		51	49.8		30.4	45.3	0.006**
Utilization of emotions	L	48	37.4	0.007**	29	35.0	0.019*	36.4	43.3	0.194
	H	39	52.2		58	48.5		40.7	54.6	0.017*
Optimism	L	53	36.1	0.0003**	35	30.7	0.00006**	42.4	47.7	0.342
	H	34	56.3		52	52.9		35.2	48.9	0.013*

Note: L – lower, H – higher.

Table 5. Links between emotional intelligence and intercultural competence level

Scales and subscales	Lower EI	Higher EI	Mann-Whitney U verification results		
			U	Z	p
Attitude	75.47	99.53	2738.0	-3.204	0.001**
Awareness	69.26	105.74	2198.0	-4.832	0.000**
Know	79.94	95.06	3127.0	-2.004	0.045*
Care	75.83	99.17	2769.0	-3.068	0.002**
Act	72.25	102.75	2458.0	-4.014	0.00006**
Knowledge	67.72	107.28	2063.5	-5.202	0.000**
Intercultural Abilities – Attitude	70.36	104.64	2293.5	-4.498	0.000**
IC	66.09	108.91	1921.5	-5.607	0.000**

Note: * level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.05$; ** level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.01$.

The results of the study show that the answer to the question “do older volunteers have higher intercultural competences and higher emotional intelligence?” is ambiguous at the subscale level, although when combining the scales, age becomes a meaningful criterion (Table 6).

Although the combined intercultural competency scale shows statistically significant differences by age groups, several subscales such as *awareness, know, act, intercultural abilities-attitude* are an exception. Differences are not statistically significant, which means that the age in these cases is not an essential criterion. On the other hand, it was found that the results in the subscales *the attitude Mittal, care and knowledge*, as well as the intercultural competence overall, were higher among senior volunteers over the young (18–25 year old) ones.

The statistical significance of the age difference at the subscale level differs in the emotional intelligence scale

as well. Criteria such as *appraisal of own emotions, social skills and optimism* are more pronounced among older volunteers, but the remaining subscales (*appraisal of others' emotions, regulation, utilisation of emotions*) reflect the criteria inherent to both age groups. In the latter case, although it is clear that the older volunteers have higher emotional qualities, the differences are not statistically significant. In summary, it can be concluded that with age, relevant competencies/abilities are being acquired, and they enable the development of emotional intelligence and intercultural competence for each individual, but some qualities can be developed at a younger age.

The results of the study show as little as one year of practice increases intercultural competence values among volunteers with richer volunteering experience (Table 7).

It should be stated that subscales such as *awareness, know, act* are noteworthy, where differences are not

Table 6. Age of volunteers: links between intercultural competence and emotional intelligence

Scales and subscales		18–25 year old	26 and older U	Mann-Whitney U verification results		
				Z	p	
Intercultural competence (IC)	Attitude	64.32	79.57	2011.0	-2.247	0.025*
	Awareness	66.53	77.40	2167.5	-1.590	0.112
	Know	71.24	72.75	2502.0	-0.221	0.825
	Care	64.09	79.80	1994.5	-2.277	0.023*
	Act	65.62	78.29	2103.0	-1.839	0.066
	Knowledge	62.24	81.63	1863.0	-2.809	0.005**
	Intercultural Abilities - Attitude	65.89	78.03	2122.0	-1.756	0.079
	IC	61.74	82.12	1827.5	-2.941	0.003**
Emotional intelligence (EI)	Appraisal of others' emotions	65.89	78.03	2122.0	-1.760	0.078
	Appraisal of own emotions	63.31	80.57	1939.0	-2.510	0.012*
	Regulation	68.17	75.78	2284.0	-1.109	0.267
	Social skills	63.02	80.85	1918.5	-2.589	0.010**
	Utilization of emotions	66.10	77.82	2137.0	-1.702	0.089
	Optimism	61.70	82.15	1825.0	-2.975	0.003**
	EI	61.46	82.39	1808.0	-3.020	0.003**

Note: * level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.05$; ** level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.01$.

statistically significant although the relationship with the length of volunteering exists. In the same way, for most aspects of emotional intelligence, higher estimates have been identified among volunteers with greater experience, with the exception of the *appraisal of own emotions* subscale, where differences are not statistically significant. Thus, in answering the question, “is there a higher degree of intercultural competence and emotional intelligence among volunteers with longer volunteering experience”, it can be noted that the longer volunteering experience is gaining

more skills and competences needed to develop both intercultural competences and emotional intelligence.

In order to answer the question, “do the volunteers in the European Volunteer Service (EVS) project have higher intercultural competence and higher emotional intelligence?” the Kruskal-Wallis H criterion was used for calculations. It turned out that the length of the volunteering (in EVS project) has a greater impact on intercultural competence but not on the emotional intelligence (Table 8).

Table 7. Volunteering time: interfaces with intercultural competence and emotional intelligence

Scales and subscales		Up to 1 year	Over 1 year	Mann-Whitney U verification results		
				U	Z	p
Intercultural competence (IC)	Attitude	64.11	80.66	1995.5	–2.433	0.015*
	Awareness	67.36	77.50	2226.5	–1.479	0.139
	Know	67.85	77.02	2261.5	–1.338	0.181
	Care	62.37	82.36	1872.0	–2.887	0.004**
	Act	69.39	75.53	2370.5	–0.888	0.374
	Knowledge	61.95	82.76	1842.5	–3.006	0.003**
	Intercultural Abilities – Attitude	64.75	80.03	2041.5	–2.203	0.028*
	IC	62.61	82.12	1889.5	–2.805	0.005**
Emotional intelligence (EI)	Appraisal of others' emotions	64.05	80.72	1991.5	–2.408	0.016*
	Appraisal of own emotions	66.63	78.21	2175.0	–1.676	0.094
	Regulation	61.55	83.15	1814.0	–3.137	0.002**
	Social skills	63.10	81.64	1924.0	–2.684	0.007**
	Utilization of emotions	64.77	80.02	2042.5	–2.207	0.027*
	Optimism	64.36	80.42	2013.5	–2.328	0.020*
	EI	60.42	84.25	1734.0	–3.427	0.001**

Note: * level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.05$; ** level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.01$.

Table 8. Volunteering time in the EST project: links with intercultural competences and emotional intelligence

Scales and subscales		1–6 months	7–9 months	10–11 months	12 months	Kruskal-Wallis H verification results	
						X ²	p
Intercultural competence (IC)	Attitude	49.06	71.09	58.76	68.18	6.632	0.085
	Awareness	47.62	61.63	65.03	69.09	6.194	0.103
	Know	57.69	57.74	64.27	65.35	1.228	0.746
	Care	52.71	56.50	60.59	72.71	5.929	0.115
	Act	48.08	56.15	64.91	72.12	8.038	0.045*
	Knowledge	56.38	48.76	59.50	75.79	9.892	0.020*
	Intercultural Abilities – Attitude	58.81	59.83	49.20	76.90	11.669	0.009**
	IC	47.81	54.22	60.77	77.15	12.304	0.006**
Emotional intelligence (EI)	Appraisal of others' emotions	64.60	55.54	59.70	66.14	1.579	0.664
	Appraisal of own emotions	61.81	55.91	62.79	65.01	0.982	0.806
	Regulation	63.46	59.07	56.51	67.68	2.056	0.561
	Social skills	56.65	59.76	58.30	70.21	3.159	0.368
	Utilization of emotions	55.21	60.78	58.47	70.41	3.517	0.319
	Optimism	49.62	61.96	63.23	69.18	4.843	0.184
	EI	56.94	57.91	58.84	70.62	3.378	0.337

Note: * level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.05$; ** level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.01$.

Only intercultural competence scales (combining all subscales) showed statistically significant differences looking at the length of the participation in the project. However, in such subscales as *attitude*, *awareness*, *know* and *care* differences are not statistically significant, suggesting the fact that the project did not have a greater impact on these aspects. Furthermore, the length of the participation in the project did not have a statistically significant impact on emotional intelligence. In other words, the EST project has a more significant contribution in increasing values in intercultural competence and only in aspects such as *act*, *knowledge*, *intercultural abilities-attitude*.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the study has revealed that the answers to the first and second questions are positive: there is a positive link among the volunteer's level of emotional intelligence, his/her intercultural competence, and the productivity of work. Higher emotional intelligence is associated with higher personal intercultural competence, which in turn responds to the productivity on the job. In the past, such trends have been observed in volunteering activities through qualitative research (Vveinhardt, Bendaraviciene, & Vinickyte, 2019), which has now been confirmed by the results of quantitative research. Similarly, studies carried out in other areas (not-volunteering) have shown that greater intercultural competence has a significant impact on the productivity of working activities (Matveev & Milner, 2004; Okoro & Washington, 2012). Furthermore, Tucker, Gullekson, and Esmond-Kiger (2014) in his study, questioned students studying abroad and associated higher emotional intelligence on the increase in intercultural competence due to increasing sensitivity and decreasing ethnocentrism. In this way, emotional intelligence creates conditions for the growth of intercultural competences, which can positively affect productivity. In this context, the volunteer age is relevant. On one hand, Cohn and Wood (1985) drew attention to the fact that age has an impact affecting frequency of communication with foreigners/people from other cultures and a sense of friendliness. Moreover, according to Oh (2017), age also determines the motivation of a volunteer to develop and self-educate; the older the person, the more motivated he/she is not only to help others but to gain some self-benefits. On the other hand, our study shows that a similar generalisation of emotional intelligence and intercultural competence could not be absolute. Although older volunteers are characterised by greater intercultural competence and higher emotional intelligence (the answer to the third question of the study), age of the volunteers may not necessarily have a significant impact on the criteria constituting intercultural competence such as awareness, know, act, intercultural abilities-attitude. In comparison with other activities, this may be influenced by the specific nature of volunteering, preparation/preparation to work with different cultural groups (Vveinhardt et al., 2019) and not only experience that is acquired over time, as evidenced by the

other results of this study. The results of the investigation implicitly confirm Lee and Won's (2018) assertion that the volunteer's previous volunteering experience increases his awareness, which in turn increases emotional and social skills. At the same time, our study shows that the length of volunteering, although linked to higher emotional intelligence and intercultural competence (the answer to the fourth question of the study), was not statistically significantly considering such criteria as awareness, know, act (in the case of intercultural competence) and appraisal of own emotions (in the case of emotional intelligence). Emotional intelligence is related to the ability to accurately assess and express emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997); therefore, increasing intercultural awareness in turn affects the successful operation of the volunteer. Moreover, according to Isham, Kolodinsky, and Kimberly (2006), longer volunteering experience increases the potential to develop social skills, which constitute one of the main components of intercultural competence and of emotional intelligence. This allows people to understand diversity better, learning to accept and understand it, and develop intercultural competences. Furthermore, the results of our study demonstrating the impact of the participation length in the EVS project showed statistically significant links to higher intercultural competences and not emotional intelligence. This may have been influenced by the fact that only a period of one year was examined in the context of the EVS. Since there has been little data on how these variables affect volunteering activities, the results of the study can have a significant impact on organising volunteer work in a way that delivers greater benefits for both voluntary organizations and the volunteers themselves.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, we excluded factors that have a significant impact on the productivity of the internationally employed volunteers. This extends the knowledge of conditions affecting the productivity of volunteer work and provides answers to questions on how productivity is influenced by the intercultural competence of volunteers, emotional intelligence, and the duration of volunteering.

Emotional intelligence complements intercultural competence by strengthening its ability to recognize emotions associated with cultural differences. A logical chain is apparent: emotional intelligence-intercultural competence-productivity of volunteering activities; higher emotional intelligence influences the growth of intercultural competences and positively influences the productivity of volunteering. The age of volunteers and the length of volunteering, during which experience is gained, expand the intercultural competence of volunteers and help to develop emotional intelligence, but these factors are not unequivocal. The fact that the age and volunteering criteria do not have influenced on all dimensions of intercultural competence and emotional intelligence indicates that there may be an untapped potential for the development

of intercultural competence and emotional intelligence prior to volunteering; in turn allowing volunteers to engage in productive activities from the start of volunteering. Furthermore, the growth of intercultural competences depends on the length of participation in the EVS project because for a great many volunteers it is the first experiences living abroad surrounded by other nationalities, cultures, and different religions every day. The study has revealed the components of intercultural competence which should be given special attention in the EVS programme, in order to increase the productivity of voluntary work.

Limitations and further studies

This study has several limitations. *Firstly*, the results of the study are obtained by interviewing only the volunteers involved in the EVS project, and the broader generalizations are therefore not possible. It would therefore make sense to expand the study in the future by involving other voluntary organisations. *Secondly*, as this study did not examine the training and development policies of the organisations sending and receiving volunteers, detailed studies that focus on these policies could provide additional expertise in the practice of volunteer training models as well as its contribution to the development of the individual's emotional intelligence and intercultural competence. *Thirdly*, there was no separate assessment of the relationship between the education of volunteers and the culture they represented. For example, the Louie et al. (2015) study has shown that national culture determines not only the expression of emotions but also their interpretation. This variable should therefore be assessed in the future. It would also make sense to evaluate the productivity of intercultural competences, emotional intelligence, and volunteer activities in the future, not only in terms of education but also in the fields of education. As the Deardorff observes (2006), intercultural competence in educational institutions can be developed in different ways. Therefore, this aspect is important in understanding how different curricula in individual country within different educational units can influence both the development of the emotional intelligence of volunteers and the education of intercultural competence. *Finally*, as the results of the investigation showed that the age of volunteers did not have a significant impact on such intercultural competences as awareness, know, act, intercultural abilities – attitude, additional studies are needed to further explain relevant factors among younger volunteers.

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