

The Ethnic Identity of Ukrainian Students (The Case of Lviv Region)

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In this article, we present the results of a pilot empirical study on ethnic identity and its psychological characteristics among students of pedagogical specialties at universities in the Lviv region, conducted in November and December 2021. Our research aimed to determine the hierarchy of structural components of the ethnic identity of Ukrainian students. Factor analysis of the studied indicators allowed us to identify the main factors influencing the transformation of ethnic identity. In particular, we traced the levels of ethnic identity formation, from diffuse ethnic identity to hyperidentity. The results indicated a low to below-average level of ethno-nihilism, and a low to average level of ethno-isolationism among the studied group. This pilot study, carried out before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, has a retrospective character, but it opens up broad perspectives for further empirical research. A comparative analysis will make it possible to identify any war-induced changes in ethnic identity, offering a basis for future educational and psycho-correctional work.

Keywords: Ukraine, students, ethnic identity, ethno-nihilism, ethno-isolationism

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Introduction

The ethnic identity of Ukrainians is a complex phenomenon that has been shaped over centuries by various historical, cultural, and political factors. The concept of “ethnic identity” reflects an individual’s or group’s awareness of their belonging to a particular ethnic community. This feeling is the result of a complex interplay of historical memory, psychological characteristics, and cultural values. Shared origin, language, religion, territory, customs, and traditions all form the basis of ethnic identity. Identification with an ethnic group is not static; it can change depending on historical circumstances and social context (Stepanov, *Ed.*, 2006). During periods of heightened interethnic tensions, ethnic identity often becomes particularly important, serving as a mobilizing factor for the ethnic community. In Ukrainian historiography, the concept of ethnic identity is used to analyse the processes of self-organization and self-identification of the Ukrainian people.

The historical formation of Ukrainian ethnic identity occurred amidst significant pressures, including Russification, Polonization, and other assimilation efforts. The twentieth century brought further challenges, with revolutions, wars, and totalitarian regimes severely impacting Ukrainian identity (Czepil, Karpenko, 2022). Soviet ideology, which actively suppressed national distinctiveness, further eroded Ukrainian identity and fostered the emergence of a Soviet identity (Nahorna, 2005). Only after Ukraine gained independence did the revival of national consciousness begin, and student youth played an active role in it.

The full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, significantly transformed the field of research into this phenomenon. The war has become a catalyst for changes in the sphere of ethnic identity. Russia’s aggressive policy has triggered a powerful wave of patriotism and consolidation of Ukrainian society. Today, the ethnic identity of Ukrainians is an important component of national security, as it unites people around shared values and ideals.

The ongoing war in Ukraine is a manifestation of a deep-rooted value conflict exacerbated by geopolitical tensions. Russia’s aggression, characterized by the violation of international borders, atrocities against civilians, and the systematic destruction of Ukrainian cities, is accompanied by a concerted effort to deny Ukrainian ethnic and national identity. This denial represents a form of cultural imperialism aimed at subjugating Ukraine and erasing its unique history and culture. By studying Ukrainian identity, scholars can better understand the processes of ethnocultural self-identification in the face of such challenges and contribute to building a more just and peaceful world. Moreover, analysing the narratives that have shaped Ukrainian identity can foster cross-cultural dialogue and help to restore historical justice.

Ethnic Identity: Transformation of the Concept

Ethnic identity in Ukraine reflects the complex socio-political and socio-psychological transformations that have taken place over a long historical period (Rymarenko, *Ed.*, 1996). Analysing these transformations requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines historical, political, and socio-cultural aspects with the psychological mechanisms of identity formation, such as group affiliation and social categorization. The conflict in Ukraine is the result not only of political contradictions but also of deep psychological traumas that have been passed down from generation to generation, forming persistent stereotypes and prejudices (Ryabchuk, 2002; Sakwa, 2014). Understanding these psychological mechanisms is key to developing strategies for conflict resolution and promoting intergroup dialogue.

According to J. Marcia's theory, identity formation consists of two (repeated) stages: crisis and commitment (Kroger, Marcia, 2011). Crises prompt the search for new solutions, while commitments solidify the connection to roots, particularly family identity. J. Phinney (Phinney, Ong, 2007) expanded on this concept by identifying three stages of ethnic identity development: "unexamined ethnic identity", "ethnic identity search", and "resolution of conflicts and contradictions". Initial identity, according to Marcia, is formed on the basis of external influences, such as family or stereotypes (Kroger, Marcia, 2011). The search stage involves testing and awareness of ethnic affiliation, often under the influence of significant events. Finally, the conflict resolution stage involves resolving contradictions through distancing or creating a dual identity. Tajfel's (1978) social identity theory explains the influence of affiliation groups, emphasizing the desire for positive self-identification through group identification. People compare their groups with others to highlight the advantages of their own group.

One of the key aspects of identity transformation in Ukraine is the growth of civic identity, which occurs against the backdrop of the evolution of ethnic identity (Kulyk, 2016; Onuch, Sasse, 2016). Analysing this dynamic requires a comprehensive approach that considers the various dimensions of ethnic identity, including linguistic, cultural, and national ones. Intensification of ethnic identity, especially in its linguistic and national dimensions, is closely linked to the escalation of conflicts (Connor, 1994; Fearon, Laitin, 2003; Posen, 1993). The development of ethnic identity in Ukraine has been covered in a number of studies (Giuliano, 2018; Kulyk, 2015; von Hagen, 1995; Kappeler, Kohut, Sysyn, von Hagen, 2003; Virág, 2012; Ploky, 2015; Wilson, 2015).

In the article "Capturing ethnicity: The case of Ukraine" (Onuch, Hale, 2018), the authors propose an analytical framework that includes four key dimensions of ethnicity: individual language preferences, language embeddedness, ethnolinguistic identification, and nationality. Using empirical survey data collected in May 2014, the authors demonstrate that the choice of one of these dimensions has significant implications for conclusions about the role of ethnicity in shaping attitudes (e.g., towards NATO membership), actions (e.g., participation in Euromaidan protests), and expectations about the behaviour of other groups (e.g., expectations of a Russian invasion).

Language identity can act as an independent dimension of identity, distinct from identification based on actual speech (Kulyk, 2015). Kulyk argues that in the Ukrainian context, a significant portion of the population identifies with the Ukrainian language, even without possessing it at a practical level or being ethnic Ukrainians. This identification is a key ethnic factor that determines social attitudes in Ukraine (Kulyk, 2018). He clarifies that changes in identification by nationality and native language correlate with changes in the perception of these categories. That is, these categories should be seen as indicators of a sense of belonging to ethnic groups and the civic nation. Language identity plays a key role in the formation of ethnic identity, as well as political views.

The study of the complex interplay between European, national, and regional identities in Central and Eastern European countries, as well as the analysis of the role of language and personal ties in maintaining and transmitting ethnic identity to future generations, reveals the profound complexities in sustaining and developing these identities (Örkény, Székelyi, 2016). The present study demonstrates how historical, cultural, and social factors influence the formation and evolution of identities in Eastern European countries.

Additionally, research on national, ethnic, linguistic, and regional identities in the context of conflict situations in Ukraine presented in a special issue of the journal *Post-Soviet Affairs* – “Identity politics in times of crisis: Ukraine as a critical case” (2018) – is of significant interest. The studies in this special issue (Giuliano, 2018; Kulyk, 2018; Onuch, Hale, 2018) show how external and internal factors can radically alter people’s identities, and demonstrate the difficulties in researching political identity, political preferences, and behaviour based on empirical data in conditions of instability and conflict.

The ethnic identity of Ukrainians has always been closely linked to issues of national consciousness, language, culture, and statehood. Prior to the full-scale Russian invasion, scholarly inquiries into the ethnic identity of Ukrainian students centred on the impact of societal and cultural factors, the educational system’s role in fostering national and cultural renewal, and the intricate relationships between ethnic, religious, and civic affiliations. Historically, the western regions of Ukraine, particularly Lviv region, have always been a centre of Ukrainian national consciousness. According to the results of the last 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census (2001), significant changes occurred in the ethnic structure of the Lviv region between 1989 and 2001. The increase in the proportion of the Ukrainian ethnic group to 94.8% in the Lviv region allows it to be classified as predominantly mono-ethnic. According to the census, 2.471 million Ukrainians lived in the Lviv region in 2001. At the same time, the number of representatives of other ethnic groups, such as Russians, Poles, Belarusians, and Jews, decreased significantly. For a detailed analysis of the dynamics of changes in the ethnic structure of the population of the Lviv region, please refer to Table 1, which presents comparative data for 1989 and 2001.

Table 1: Percentage of the Most Numerous Nationalities in Lviv Oblast (according to the 1989 and 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Censuses) %. Sources: (All-Ukrainian Population Censuses, 2001; Makarenko, 2018).

Ukrainians		Russians		Poles		Jews		Belarusians	
1989	2001	1989	2001	1989	2001	1989	2001	1989	2001
90.4	94.8	7.1	3.55	1.0	0.73	0.5	0.08	0.4	0.2

Ethnic identity is a dynamic process deeply rooted in an individual's self-concept. The formation of ethnic identity is a complex process that includes recognizing oneself as part of a particular ethnic group, adopting its values, norms, and traditions. Ethnic identity influences the self-esteem, feelings of belonging, and social behaviour of an individual. It can be a source of strength and support, but can also lead to conflicts and prejudices. In the process of forming ethnic identity, psychological factors such as cognitive processes, emotions, and motivation play an important role. Maintaining a national-cultural consensus as an important aspect of ethnic identity requires constant dialogue and mutual understanding between different groups. Psychological resilience, their ability to adapt and tolerance are key factors for the individual's successful integration into a cross-cultural society.

Ethno-nihilism is the rejection of one's own ethnic affiliation; it is often accompanied by a search for new social identities that satisfy the need for belonging. Ethno-indifference is indifference towards one's own ethnic identity, manifested in indifference towards ethnic affiliation. Ethno-isolationism is belief in the superiority of one's own people. It is often associated with xenophobia, a negative attitude towards interethnic marriages, and a stated desire to "purify" national culture. Positive ethnic identity indicates a positive attitude towards one's own ethnic affiliation, combined with respect for other cultures and ethnic groups. It tends to be associated with international understanding and tolerance. Ethno-centricism (according to the "Types of Ethnic Identity" method of H. Soldatova and S. Ryzhova mentioned in Osmanova, Spivak, 2023) is a characteristic of individual and mass consciousness that determines the assessment of life phenomena through the prism of the traditions and values of one's own ethnic group and reflects relations both within the group itself and its relations with other groups. Ethno-fanaticism is readiness to take aggressive action for the sake of ethnic interests (e.g., denying the rights and social privileges of people in other ethnic groups, recognising ethnic rights over human rights, and justifying aggressive actions in the name of the well-being of the in-group).

The distinction between ethno-centricism and ethno-isolationism is fundamentally one of conceptual domain, separating a psychological orientation from a political action. Ethno-centricism is a socio-psychological attitude or cognitive bias defined by the belief that one's own ethnic group has to serve as the universal standard against which all other groups are evaluated. In contrast, ethno-isolationism is a political strategy advocating for the state's deliberate disengagement from global affairs driven by the explicit objective of enforcing cultural and religious isolation to maintain the perceived purity or moral

integrity of the dominant ethnic group. Ethno-centricism constitutes the internal motivational system – the ideological root – while ethno-isolationism represents the external, formalized policy outcome chosen to operationalize that prejudice (Osmanova, Spivak, 2023).

Aim of the Study and Hypothesis

Our study of ethnic identity in Ukraine enhances the understanding of how identity is formed and changed and can assist in the development of national consolidation strategies and in counteracting external aggression. The choice of Lviv region for the pilot study was conditioned by two factors. Firstly, this region is one of the largest educational centres in Ukraine, providing access to a large sample of students. Secondly, Lviv region has a rich history and culture which influences the formation of the ethnic identity of its residents. Students, as before, remain active participants in these processes, joining volunteer activities, information campaigns, and the defence of the country.

The aim of the article is to determine the hierarchy of structural components of ethnic identity of Ukrainian students.

The hypothesis of our study is that students exhibit low levels of ethnic hyperidentity, consequently demonstrating relatively high levels of ethnic tolerance. This is due to both the historical development of the Lviv region as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which generally allowed Ukrainians to preserve their own ethnic identity, and interaction with representatives of other ethnic groups living in the region and now visiting it as a major tourist centre.

Methods

The pilot study employed an online survey conducted in Ukraine during November and December 2021 (two months prior to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022). The purpose of the study was to explore ethnic self-identification among first- and second-year undergraduate students majoring in education. Three public universities in Lviv region, Ukraine, were selected: Lviv Ivan Franko National University, Lviv Polytechnic National University, and Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University. These institutions were chosen because they are the only ones offering pedagogical programs. University administrations were contacted to request that they distribute the survey invitation to their first- and second-year undergraduate students in education-related fields. Of the 3,839 eligible students, 417 participated, yielding a response rate of 10.9%. Various factors may have influenced the response rate, including the exam period and the increasing tension in the country leading up to the full-scale invasion. After excluding 17 incomplete responses, the final sample size for analysis was 400 students. The

average age of participants was 18.8 years (range: 17–20 years). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The pilot study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the university where the researchers are affiliated.

The survey consisted of a complex of questions (a questionnaire and three scales). The data collection tool developed for the study was a questionnaire which included questions about age, gender, year of study, and language of communication. In order to ensure confidentiality, the questionnaire did not include questions that would allow respondents to be identified directly or indirectly. We used the “Who am I?” questionnaire (Kuhn, McPartland), the “Personal Differential” method (modification by D. Bohdanova and S. Posokhova), and the “Types of Ethnic Identity” method (H. Soldatova and S. Ryzhova) (Osmanova, Spivak, 2023).

The “Who am I?” questionnaire was used to study the content characteristics of ethnic identity. The question “Who am I?” is directly related to the characteristics of a person’s self-perception, that is, their “I” or “self-concept”. Respondents are asked to answer this question twenty times. The relevance of ethnic identity is confirmed by the presence of an answer indicating one’s nationality. The significance of ethnic identity depends on the number of statements indicating one’s nationality.

The “Personal Differential” method is designed to diagnose certain personality traits and to identify discrepancies between self-perceptions. Any object or feeling perceived by an individual can be characterized using bipolar scales of personality traits (two opposite adjectives) that best represent the poles of the three classical factors of the semantic differential (evaluation, potency, activity).

The “Types of Ethnic Identity” method is designed to diagnose ethnic identity and its transformation under conditions of interethnic tension. Types of identity with varying quality and degree of manifestation of ethnic tolerance are identified based on a wide-ranging ethnocentrism scale, starting from the “denial” of identity, expressed through negativity and intolerance towards one’s own ethnic group, and ending with national fanaticism – the apotheosis of intolerance and the highest degree of negativity towards other ethnic groups. The questionnaire contains six scales that correspond to the following types of ethnic identity: ethno-nihilism, ethnic indifference, positive ethnic identity, ethno-egoism, ethno-isolationism, and ethno-fanaticism.

Results

The study primarily included young people aged 17 to 20 ($M = 18.8$). Women were significantly overrepresented (71.8%) compared to men (28.2%). First-year students constituted 57.8% of the sample, while second-year students made up 42.3%. All participants indicated Ukrainian as their native language; however, 20 individuals (5%) reported Russian as their language of daily communication. It is worth noting that the official language of Ukraine is Ukrainian. Its status as the sole state language was re-established in 1989 with the law “On Languages” by the Ukrainian SSR, and

later confirmed in the Constitution of Ukraine (1996) after the country gained independence.

The considerable gender imbalance among participants ($F = 71.8\%$, $M = 28.2\%$) can be attributed to two factors: firstly, women tend to study pedagogical sciences more frequently, and secondly, women are generally more willing to participate in research. Men, on the other hand, are typically less active in research, a common trend in scientific studies. Factor analysis was employed to identify relationships between various variables. It did not reveal any statistically significant differences based on gender.

Using the “Who Am I?” test, we identified the characteristics that students considered most important in shaping their ethnic identity. These include elements of national culture such as native land; language; their historical past; rituals, customs, and traditions; the notion of a shared origin among community members; religion; and psychological characteristics. Elements of material culture (such as the features of traditional housing, food preparation, and clothing), as well as specific physical characteristics of the national community, were found to be the least significant in the respondents’ self-concept. It is worth noting that when responding to the question “Who Am I?”, 85% of students listed their own nationality as “Ukrainian” in their top three statements; in addition, most response sheets (63%) also included characteristics such as “patriot”, which are also factors of ethnic identity.

The “Personal Differential” indicates the subjective, emotional and semantic ideas of a person about themselves and other people (see Table 2).

Table 2. Personal differential indices

Item	Personal differential factors	Indices
1	Assessment factor	1.82
2	Strength factor	1.43
3	Commitment factor	1.37

As can be seen from the table, of the three personal differential factors, the assessment factor gave the highest average result, approaching 2.0 points out of 3.0. This indicates that the participating students identified themselves as individuals with a certain ethnic identity and tended to perceive themselves as carriers of positive, socially desirable characteristics. Respondents gave slightly lower values when it came to the strength factor, which indicates confidence, independence, a tendency to rely on one’s own strength. Respondents’ low average score for the commitment factor indicates a certain passivity and some emotional inertia with regard to their own ethnic identity. While the students identified with their ethnicity, the moderate score suggests their ethnic identity provides a perceptible, though not dominant, source of internal strength and autonomy.

The “Types of Ethnic Identity” method was used to test the students’ levels of ethno-nihilism and ethno-isolationism. The results were verified using the Student’s

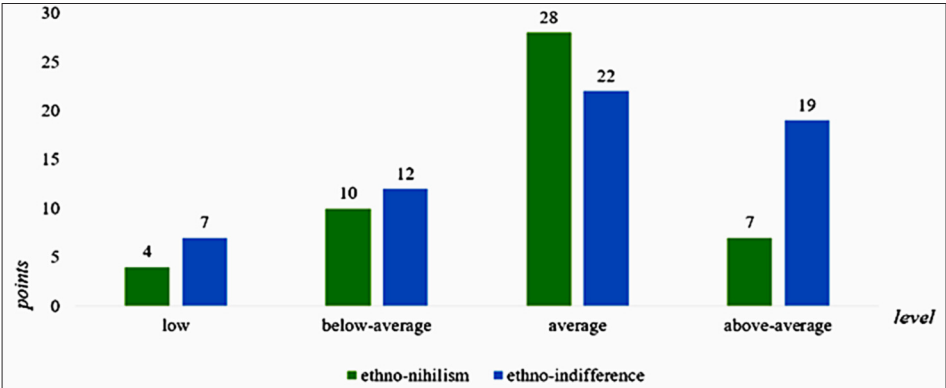


Figure 1. Indices of ethnic identity by types of respondents with various levels of ethno-nihilism

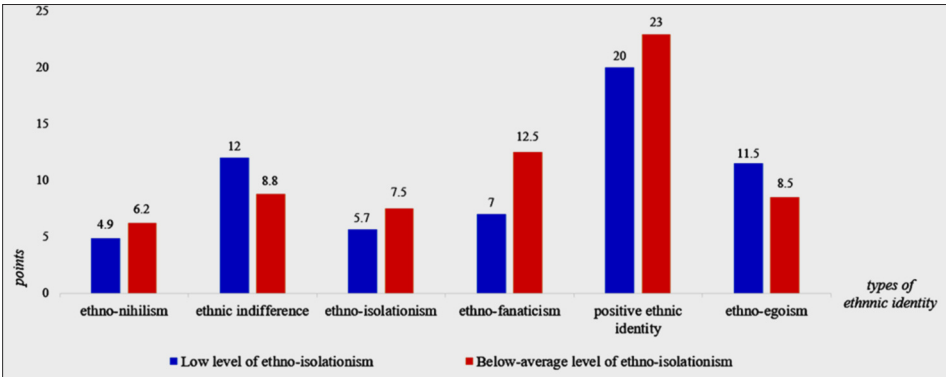


Figure 2. Indices of ethnic identity types of respondents demonstrating various levels of ethno-isolationism

t-test. Two groups of subjects were identified: those with low and below-average levels of ethno-nihilism (Fig. 1).

Respondents with a low level of ethno-nihilism demonstrated a higher level of ethno-indifference than the respondents with a below-average level of ethno-nihilism. Respondents with above-average levels of ethno-nihilism had a higher level of ethno-indifference compared to those with a low level of ethno-nihilism.

The study also identified two groups of subjects expressing low and medium levels of ethno-isolationism. Differences between the groups are shown in Fig. 2.

A comparative analysis of the sample groups showed that people with a low level of ethno-isolationism have higher levels of ethnic indifference and ethno-egoism. The respondents with an average level of ethno-isolationism demonstrated higher levels of ethno-nihilism, ethno-egoism, ethno-fanaticism, and positive ethnic identity. Unsurprisingly, students with a higher level of ethno-isolationism were more negative towards other ethnic groups, reacted more emotionally to environments not dominated by their own ethnic group, and expressed aggressive and hostile reactions towards other groups.

Ethno-egoism and ethno-fanaticism are the steps of hyperbolization of ethnic identity, which means the emergence of discriminatory forms of interethnic relations. In interethnic interaction, hyperidentity manifests itself in various forms of ethnic intolerance: advocating restriction of the rights and opportunities of members of other groups, aggressive and violent actions against another group, and even genocide. The respondents we studied did not manifest high levels of the characteristics of ethnic intolerance, so it can be argued that intolerance is not inherent for them.

Factor analysis of psychological characteristics of students' ethnic identity

For the whole group of respondents, we made a nine-factor model that explains 62.24% of the total data variance. The remaining variances are due to random effects which are not considered in this model. Factor loads (with $p \leq 0.05$) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor loads of the studied indices

Factor	Scales	Factor loads	% of total dispersion
Factor 1 Diffuse identity	Social communicative awkwardness	0.778	11.94
	Intolerance of uncertainty	0.841	
	Focus on avoiding failure	0.608	
	Excessive desire for conformity	0.524	
Factor 2 Maladaptation	Adaptation	-0.654	10.31
	Maladaptation	0.644	
	Acceptance of oneself	-0.506	
	Rejection of others	0.594	
Factor 3 Ethnic hyperidentity	Ethno-nihilism	-0.526	9.44
	Ethno-egoism	-0.745	
	Ethno-isolation	-0.674	
	Ethno-fanaticism	-0.655	
Factor 4 Standard identity	Affinity	0.711	6.29
	Importance of nationality	0.682	
	Use of language	-0.683	
Factor 5 Desire for dominance	Norm	-0.683	6.36
	Domination	0.567	
Factor 6 Conformity	Majority-minority interaction	0.545	5.89
	Self-rejection	0.753	
	Acceptance of others	0.735	
Factor 7 Indecisiveness	Internal control	0.525	5.03
	Conformism	0.824	
Factor 8 Frustration tolerance	Increased desire for status growth	-0.821	4.92
	Frustration intolerance	-0.601	
Factor 9 Emotionally unstable identity	Maladaptation	-0.545	4.18
	Emotional comfort	0.787	
	Emotional discomfort	0.617	
	External control	0.626	

Let us analyse the results obtained for each factor.

Factor 1 “Diffuse ethnic identity” characterizes a weak, unclearly expressed, or “blurred” ethnic identity; such individuals are characterized by social and communicative awkwardness, intolerance of uncertainty, focus on avoiding failure, and an excessive desire for conformity. The importance of the indicator of intolerance to uncertainty in our results can be interpreted as an age-related feature of the young people who made up the sample, as self-determination is one of the main new aspects of character to form at that age.

Factor 2 “Maladaptation” combines such indicators as adaptation, maladaptation, acceptance of oneself, and rejection of others. A person who does not accept themselves cannot accept others. Individuals who perceive others positively see people as “fairly good” and do not experience strong anxiety or insecurity, thus better adapting to life in society. Negative trends in the formation of the I-concept accompanied by instability of the emotional sphere lead to maladaptation. Our results showed that there was a close internal connection between positive group (ethnic) identity and out-of-group (interethnic) tolerance.

Factor 3 “Ethnic hyperidentity” combines indicators such as ethno-egoism, ethno-nihilism, ethno-isolationism, and ethno-fanaticism, all of which are criteria of intolerance. Our results showed that these characteristics were not inherent among respondents, making it reasonable to claim that they are tolerant. The respondents respect representatives of other ethnic groups, are open to interacting with them, and do not display superiority. Cross-cultural and inter-ethnic characteristics are not perceived as a threat to their own ethnic identity, which creates opportunities for the free self-expression of each individual and the formation of unity in diversity.

Factor 4 “Standard identity” refers to affiliation and the importance of nationality and language. It can be described as a positive ethnic identity (standard), representing a balance of tolerance towards one's own and other ethnic groups. Standard identity could be seen as a necessary condition for the independent and stable existence of ethnic groups and also as a context supportive of peaceful intercultural interaction in the polyethnic world. Therefore, a positive ethnic identity is accorded the status of norm. People's awareness of their ethnicity varies greatly depending on whether they live in a polyethnic or monoethnic environment. The respondents to our survey were all aware of their ethnicity.

Factor 5 “Desire for Dominance” comprises two indicators: positive ethnic identity and ethno-egoism. The results obtained suggest that these indicators are mutually exclusive. Therefore, a positive ethnic identity does not imply the separation of one's own ethnic group from others, superiority, or a desire for dominance. Consequently, the subjects' own ethnic self-identification is accompanied by an openness to interacting with representatives of other ethnic groups on an equal footing.

Factor 6 “Conformity” combines majority-minority interaction, conformity, and self-rejection. The substantive characteristics of the indicators forming this factor suggest that interacting with others, including representatives of other ethnic groups,

often involves neglecting one's own needs and interests. This can be evidence of an inferiority complex and lead to the accumulation of anger, which is mostly directed inward but can sometimes be projected onto others.

Factor 7 "Indecisiveness" combines internal control and conformism. This indicates the use of self-regulation skills to adapt to the demands, values, views of other people, and society in general. This is a normal process that ensures an individual's successful socialization, their integration into society, and their adoption of its norms. However, if one's own needs are neglected, it can lead to indecisiveness, lack of initiative, and the accumulation of anger.

Factor 8 "Frustration Tolerance" combines indicators of professional aspiration and frustration intolerance. Our results indicated that respondents did not, at this point in their lives, express a strong desire for a career; the numerical values of this factor were close to those for Factor 7. The students also did not display characteristics of frustration intolerance.

Factor 9 "Emotionally unstable identity" combines maladaptation, external control, and emotional comfort and discomfort, which indicate negative trends in the formation of ethnic identity. Negative trends in the formation of the I-concept are accompanied by an unstable emotional sphere, which leads to maladaptation and emotional discomfort. This factor can negatively affect the transformation of ethnic identity, leading to the formation of hyperidentity of ethnic tendencies.

For some young people, identity formation presents a significant challenge. Often, a clear sense of self emerges only after a prolonged period of exploration and experimentation with different values and choices. This period of exploration, sometimes referred to as a psychosocial moratorium, can be fraught with negative emotions, hinder commitment to education and career goals, and prolong the transition from adolescence to adulthood. During this phase of personal development, individuals may struggle to establish their own value systems, goals, and ideals, hindering their psychosocial self-determination. This can lead to feelings of uncertainty, confusion, and a range of negative emotional experiences. These internal struggles can also have a negative impact on the development of their ethnic identity.

The factor analysis of the studied indices allowed us to identify the main factors in the student respondents' ethnic identity. In particular, various levels of ethnic identity were observed, from diffuse ethnic identity to hyperidentity.

In order to prevent destructive developments in the ethnic identity of an individual, we recommend implementing preventive measures and appropriate educational work. In our opinion, it is expedient to conduct socio-psychological training for students in order to form a positive I-concept, adequate self-esteem, and a normative ethnic identity.

One effective way to foster a harmonious ethnic identity among young people is through education in ethnic tolerance. Teaching tolerance involves cultivating a willingness to understand others and show a tolerant attitude towards other people's unique perspectives and actions. In the intellectual domain, it is crucial to provide

young people with a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the values of tolerance. This includes exploring the ideals of tolerance, emphasizing the principles of respectful and equitable interactions with individuals from diverse social and national backgrounds.

Value-semantic formations embody the moral significance of tolerant behaviour. When influencing the intellectual development of students, the primary method should be persuasion. Persuasion involves providing reasonable evidence for the need for tolerant behaviour. In accepting the presented information, students not only adopt concepts and judgments but also the underlying logic of the teacher's position. Simultaneously, while evaluating the information, students may affirm their existing views and positions, change them, or construct their own system of beliefs and interpersonal relationships. They come to understand that individuals who appear different or behave differently might be mistakenly perceived as enemies or adversaries and that external impressions can often be highly misleading. Therefore, by incorporating historical facts and references to historical figures, as well as engaging in discussions, we can foster a belief in the necessity of tolerance towards all individuals.

The method of persuasion is consistent with the method of self-education, which assumes that individuals form their own system of beliefs and values consciously and independently, searching for a solution to a social problem. At the heart of this formation are logical conclusions drawn by the person themselves. In the emotional sphere, it is necessary to form the nature of moral experiences that are associated with norms or deviations from norms and ideals: empathy, compassion, trust, gratitude, sensitivity, empathy, shame, and so on. Methods of influencing the emotional sphere of a young person involve helping them form the necessary skills to manage their emotions, teaching them to manage specific feelings, and understanding their emotional states and the reasons that give rise to them.

The development of emotional self-regulation has a positive effect on emotional comfort and adaptation, in general. Helping students develop self-regulation and creating conditions for the normative development of the ethnic identity involves the cooperation of university teachers and psychologists in three main areas: psycho-correctional work by psychologists with students with ethnic identity disorders; work on self-improvement, including techniques and methods of working with people who have a diffuse level of ethnic identity; and correction of family relations in the direction of creating a family situation conducive to the development of ethnic identity.

Conclusions

As the research results testify, ethnic identity is an extremely important aspect of self-awareness which determines socially significant forms of behaviour and affects relationships between people, from interpersonal to international ones. Ethnic

identity is a form of social identity associated with a person's acceptance of the values, norms, and patterns of behaviour of their own ethnic group and others.

In our study, the most important factors in the formation of ethnic identity and national culture identified by the student respondents were: homeland, language, historical past, national rites, customs and traditions, ideas about the common origin of community members and national traits, religion, and psychological characteristics.

This pilot study of the psychological characteristics of students' ethnic identity confirmed our assumptions, showing that respondents had low to below-average levels of ethno-nihilism, and low to medium levels of ethno-isolationism. Students with a low level of ethno-nihilism displayed a higher level of external control than those with a level classified as below average. People with a low level of ethno-isolationism displayed higher levels of ethnic indifference and the desire to acquire social status compared to those with an average level of ethno-isolationism. The factor analysis allowed us to trace the structure of ethnic identity: "blurred" ethnic identity, ethno-isolationism, norm, and ethno-nihilism.

This pilot study opens wide prospects for further empirical research. A comparative analysis could be used to identify war-related changes in ethnic identity and serve as a basis for future psycho-correctional work. Such a study could, over time, become both cross-cultural and longitudinal in nature, which would contribute to the comparative analysis and identification of factors that determine ethnic identity, allowing their prognostic and corrective potential to be clearly traced. In view of the above, the study of psychological features of ethnic identity of university students in Ukraine allows us not only to better understand its content but also promote intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and forecasting and to eliminate negative phenomena.

Even post-war, the study of students' ethnic identity will remain pertinent. The war has brought about profound transformations in the worldview and values of the younger generation, necessitating in-depth research. Specifically, alterations in social structures, intergenerational relationships, and attitudes towards the state and other societal institutions will require a prolonged period of adaptation. The process of nation-building in Ukraine, where youth play a pivotal role, also demands a good understanding of this generation's ethnic identity. Moreover, globalization and migration processes, particularly within multicultural contexts and amid growing ethnic diversity, continue to influence the formation of young people's identities, requiring ongoing monitoring.

Our pilot study, while providing valuable insights, has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the data and planning future research. First, the study was confined to the Lviv region. While Lviv has unique characteristics, generalizing the findings to all of Ukraine might be overreach. Conducting similar research in other regions, such as Kharkiv, Odesa, and Kyiv, which have distinct historical and cultural backgrounds, would provide a more representative dataset and highlight regional variations. Second, a significant proportion of respondents identified strongly with their national identity, patriotism, and gender. This finding

may be specific to Lviv, where patriotic sentiments are traditionally robust. In regions that have been influenced by different cultures, responses might vary. Third, the study was conducted before the full-scale invasion, a period marked by significant societal tensions in Ukraine. This context could have influenced respondents' answers, as their sense of identity and values might have been heightened. Future studies could explore how these identification processes have evolved since the war began. Our findings offer a valuable contribution to understanding identity formation in contemporary Ukraine; however, they must be interpreted within the context of these limitations. To obtain a more comprehensive and representative dataset, further research is needed, involving a larger and more diverse sample of respondents, different regions, and considering the evolving socio-cultural context.

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