

Modelling Game as Socio-Psychological Paradigm for Resolving Ethno-National Conflicts

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Abstract: The aim of this study was: (a) to evaluate the effectiveness of training to improve the intercultural behaviour of students; (b) to study and enrich their personal experience of resolving interethnic and international conflicts; and (c) to identify factors that contribute to the effective development of relevant skills that ensure social self-efficacy, reduce social avoidance, increase empathy and intercultural tolerance. The study used general scientific theoretical, empirical, experimental and statistical methods. To diagnose the dynamics of the studied variables – social self-efficacy, social avoidance, empathy, intercultural tolerance – "Scale of social self-efficacy of Fan and Mak", "Situational scale of social avoidance"; checklists "Interpersonal skills"; "Basic scale for the diagnosis of empathy in adults"; diagnosis of the level of formation of intercultural tolerance were used. At the experimental stage of the study, a series of training based on modelling games (simulations) to resolve ethno-national conflicts was conducted. At the end of the training, a repeated diagnostic section of the dynamics of the above-mentioned variables and a semi-structured interview was conducted, which included 5 open-ended questions. The multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of these variables in comparison with EG and CG groups revealed significant dynamics in the variables "social self-efficacy", "empathy", "intercultural tolerance" and minor changes in the variable "social avoidance". The dynamics of the EG index was more significant. Respondents also praised the types of work such as working in groups, the model of providing feedback during game situations and presentations of student projects. The results of this study confirmed that the model based on simulation games (simulations) for resolving ethno-national conflicts was effective in improving social self-efficacy, empathy and intercultural tolerance and in lowering psychological barriers (social avoidance) of EG participants compared to CG individuals. Participants reported that this type of training allowed them to develop skills for future professional activities in a multicultural (poly-ethnic or poly-national) community.

Keywords: Ethno-national conflicts, reasons, solution methods, paradigmatic principles, modelling game.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of multiethnicity of social and cultural ecosystems is gradually becoming global and is becoming a factor in exacerbating economic problems and an ideological tool for pedalling interethnic conflicts (Makarenko 2001; Semeniv 2018). Ethnonationalism, as a certain ideology, increases the number of supporters around the world and leads to the weaponisation of thoughts and actions. Different approaches are used to overcome the problem of clashing cultures and traditions in a cosmopolitan society in general, and in the educational environment in particular, to increase the understanding (solving misunderstandings) of people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, including information work through media resources, (discussion) clubs of various types, training programs.

The problem of resolving interethnic and international conflicts has been the subject of study by both Ukrainian and foreign scholars. Among Ukrainian researchers, M. Vavrynychuk (2009), A. Hirnyk (2003), V. Yevtukh (2009), V. Kotyhorenko (2004), O. Kuts (2003), and T. Senyushkina (2005) contributed to the study of the problem. Among foreigners, this problem was considered by R. Abdulatipov (2004), O. Arshba (2000), D. Horowitz (1998), R. Dahl (1963), S. Lipset (1985), K. Mitchell (1989), L. Hoperskaya (2009), and others. Among the proposed approaches to resolving ethno-national conflicts, in authors' opinion, the most promising is a modelling game, which can be considered as a socio-psychological paradigm, but which has not been studied experimentally enough.

Therefore, the objectives of this study were: (a) to evaluate the effectiveness of training to improve the effectiveness of intercultural behaviour of students; (b) to study and enrich their personal experience of resolving interethnic and interethnic conflicts; and (c) to identify factors that contribute to the effective development of relevant skills that ensure social self-

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efficacy, reduce social avoidance, increase empathy and intercultural tolerance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is quantitative, quasi-experimental and three-stage, which used general scientific theoretical, empirical, experimental and statistical methods. social self-efficacy, social avoidance, empathy, intercultural tolerance – “Scale of social self-efficacy of Fan and Mak”, “Situational scale of social avoidance”; checklists “Interpersonal skills”; “Basic scale for the diagnosis of empathy in adults”; diagnosis of the level of formation of intercultural tolerance were used.

At the experimental stage of the study, a series of training based on modelling games (simulations) to resolve ethno-national conflicts was conducted. At the end of the training, a repeated diagnostic section of the dynamics of the above-mentioned variables and a semi-structured interview was conducted, which included 5 open-ended questions. Questions for a semi-structured interview:

- 1) Which six skills for resolving ethno-national conflicts acquired during the training sessions were useful for you?
- 2) What exactly did you do to acquire skills for resolving ethno-national conflicts?
- 3) How confident are you that you will be able to use the acquired skills to resolve ethno-national conflicts?
- 4) In what situations do you plan to use the skills acquired to resolve ethno-national conflicts?

Please describe a scenario of a situation in which you will use these skills.

- 5) What aspects of the training program did you find most useful?

The statistical array was processed using the software package SPSS Version: 10.0.5.

For the experimental approbation of the model, which is based on modelling games (simulations) for solving ethno-national conflicts, a 180-hour training course on “Intercultural Communication” was chosen, which is taught to students of the educational degree “Master”, Specialty “051 – Economics”, specialisation: “8M01-European integration, 8M02-International trade”, “8M03-International business and audit”, “8M04-International financial management”, “8M05-Management of international business”, “8M06-Management of international competitiveness” of Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadim Hetman.

As part of this course, a series of activities was held for students of the experimental group of 24 people, which included: (at the preparatory stage) presentations of students of their own ethnic or national identity. The proposed topics of the presentations were such as: “My culture: philosophy, principles and uniqueness”, “Written and unwritten traditions and customs of my culture”; training courses based on simulation games on various aspects of conflict resolution, in particular: 1) understanding of a conflict; 2) improving communication; 3) understanding of diversity in values; 4) building trust; 5) providing perspective in relationships; 6) raising the level of EQ (emotional intelligence) and 7) promoting cooperation.

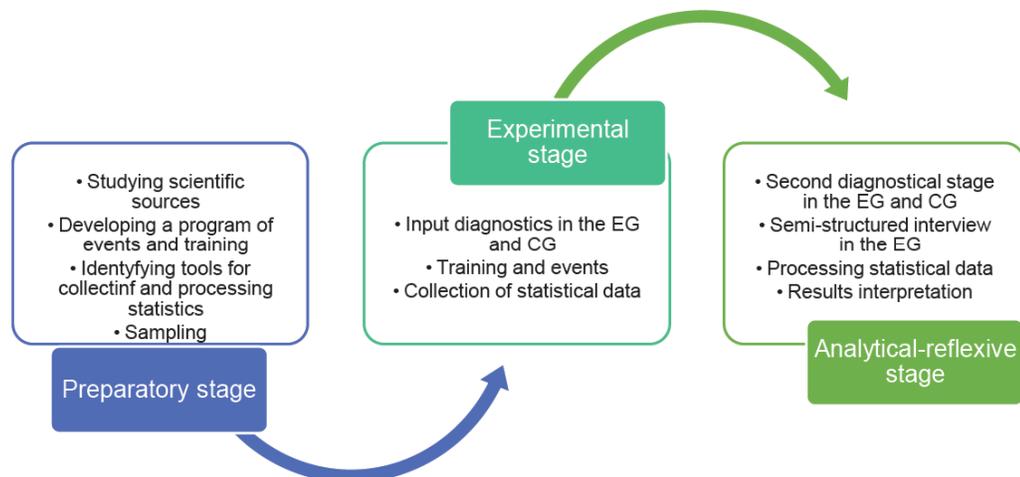


Figure 1: The course of the study.

Ideas from Mary Scannell's book "The big book of conflict resolution games" (Scannell 2010) were widely used in the training courses.

The key objectives of the training courses were to influence the social self-efficacy of students, their socio-psychological barriers (social avoidance), empathy and intercultural tolerance. The course of the study is represented graphically (Figure 1).

Sample of students of Kyiv National Economic University named after V. Hetman for experimental (EG) and control (CG) groups was formed on the basis of random selection and numbered 48 people (EG=24 and CG=24). However, given the objectives of the study, the formation of EG required the presence of representatives of different ethnic groups and nationalities. Therefore, 3 students from the Crimean Tatars, 4 foreign students from Uzbekistan, 3 ethnic Hungarians, 4 ethnic Russians, 2 ethnic Romanians, 5 Ukrainians, 3 students from the Republic of Congo were selected for the experimental group. All 24 members of the experimental group were involved in the semi-structured interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A quasi-experiment was used to assess the effectiveness of the model based on simulation games (simulations) to resolve ethno-national conflicts on

social self-efficacy, psychological barriers (social avoidance), empathy, and intercultural tolerance of EC and CG participants. It was hypothesised that compared to the control group, which was taught according to the usual model, the experimental group noted significantly greater dynamics in social self-efficacy (SS), intercultural tolerance (IT), empathy (E) and showed a decrease in situational social avoidance (SA) through participation in the program of measures developed by the authors.

Both groups were diagnosed before and after the experiment with the same diagnostic tools. Table 1 shows that the average values of the four dependent variables in the CG remained relatively unchanged after the experiment, while the EG values increased (Table 1).

The performed multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of these variables in the comparison of the EG and CG groups revealed significant dynamics in the variables SS, IT and E, and minor changes in the SA. The dynamics of the EG index was more significant. F values and their significance level are shown in Table 2.

The consolidated results of the survey of EG respondents in a semi-structured interview are presented below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables for the EG and CG

Dependent variables		EG (n=24)		CG (n=24)	
		Averages (Mean)	Standard deviation (S.D.)	Averages (Mean)	Standard deviation (S.D.)
SS	Before the experiment	29.67	3.61	31.03	3.62
	After the experiment	31.71	4.17	31.91	4.19
IT	Before the experiment	56.76	16.59	55.22	14.61
	After the experiment	48.19	14.38	53.19	16.56
E	Before the experiment	147.98	31.77	165.34	28.20
	After the experiment	168.71	27.67	165.34	30.35
SA	Before the experiment	90.19	17.08	97.66	18.14
	After the experiment	98.88	17.68	97.88	15.79

Note: SS – social self-efficacy; IT – intercultural tolerance; E – empathy; SA – social avoidance.

Table 2: F Values from MANOVA Analysis for the EG and CG

Variables	F values	Critical level of significance
SS	1.66	0.202
IT	4.14	0.045
E	11.88	0.001
SA	4.84	0.030

Note: sample size 48 people (n=48).

Table 3: Useful Skills for Resolving Ethno-National Conflicts

Useful skills	Number of respondents (n=24)	
	Count	Percentage
Establishing social contacts/communication	14	58%
Request for help or information	10	42%
Interaction in groups	6	25%
Polite refusal of a request	6	25%
Expression of dissent	2	8%
Providing comments or feedback	0	0

Questions 1. Which six skills for resolving ethno-national conflicts acquired during the training sessions were useful for you?

Survey participants often mentioned more than one skill, so the number of responses is shown in Table 3 above.

Question 2. What exactly did you do to acquire skills for resolving ethno-national conflicts?

Respondents (n=24) listed from one to seven types of exercises they performed to acquire skills for resolving ethno-national conflicts. The authors of the study identified 67 skills that were trained in these exercises and which were grouped by six subscales of the checklist "Interpersonal Skills" (Wong 2001: Appendix A-7, A-8), "The basic scale for the diagnosis of empathy with growth" (Carré *et al.* 2013); diagnosis of the level of formation of cultural tolerance (Barbelko 2015).

After that, the respondents were asked to arrange these six subgroups of skills (active involvement, demonstration of assertiveness, relationship building, providing and receiving feedback when working in groups, self-improvement and interrupting an interlocutor) in order of importance. The ranking results are presented in Table 4 below.

Question 3. How has your confidence increased, compared to what it was before participating in the training courses, will you be able to use the acquired skills to resolve ethno-national conflicts?

The answers of the respondents (n=24) were distributed on a 5-point scale, where 1 – did not increase to 5 – dramatically. 4 respondents (17%) said that their confidence increased dramatically, 13 people (54%) noted a significant increase in confidence, 2 respondents (8%) reported a significant increase in confidence, 1 person (4%) could not determine whether some shifts in her/his confidence, and 1 person (1%) answered negatively to this question. Among the difficulties in using the acquired skills were psychological barriers, cultural differences, lack of communication skills.

Question 4. In what situations do you plan to use the acquired skills to resolve ethno-national conflicts? Please describe a scenario of a situation in which you will use these skills.

In situations of self-affirmation – 10 (42%) respondents, in situations of informal communication – 14 (58%), and in situations of social interaction – 13 (54%) respondents.

Question 5. What aspects of the training program did you find most useful?

Table 4: Results of Rating of Skill Groups That Are Identified as Necessary for the Settlement of Ethno-National Conflicts

Actions	Number of respondents (n=24)	
	Count	Percentage
Providing and receiving feedback while working in groups	3	13%
Active involvement	12	50%
Self-improvement	5	22%
Building relationships	9	37%
Demonstration of assertiveness	11	45%
Interruption of an interlocutor	6	25%

20 (82%) people noted “broadening of horizons” and “raising awareness in cultural aspects of different ethnic groups and nationalities”, 22 (90%) highlighted “development of communication skills”, 18 people (76%) – “interaction with representatives of different ethnic groups and nationalities in different socio-cultural situations”.

Most of the respondents positively assessed the format of the training, noting the positive approach of the trainers to the creation and interaction of the participants of the experiment within the polyethnic and multinational environment. Respondents also praised the types of work such as working in groups, the model of providing feedback during game situations and presentations of student projects. Thus, in general, based on the results of the survey of EG respondents in a semi-structured interview, it can be said that the model based on simulation games (simulations) to resolve ethno-national conflicts has a good resource for solving the problem of overcoming such conflicts.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study confirmed that the model based on simulation games (simulations) for resolving ethno-national conflicts was effective in improving social self-efficacy, empathy and intercultural tolerance and in lowering psychological barriers (social avoidance) of EC participants compared to CG individuals. Participants reported that participation in this type of training allowed them to develop skills for future professional activities in a multicultural (poly-ethnic or poly-national) community. In the future, such training courses can be used for foreign students, specialists of international companies, who need to master cross-cultural competencies to achieve career success, which can be considered as a prospect for further research.

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