

## Effects of Empathetic Ability on Multicultural Acceptance in Korean Teenagers and Their Parents

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Received October 5, 2022; Revised October 24, 2022; Accepted, October 31, 2022

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### Abstract

Teenagers from multicultural families living in Korea are suffering from invisible discrimination and cannot fit well in with Koreans having traditional values due to their different appearance and cultures. This study attempted to elucidate the effect of empathetic ability on multicultural acceptance in Korean teenagers and their parents in order to evaluate the perception against teenagers from multicultural families. Korean middle and high school students and their parents were asked to fill out a standardized self-reported questionnaires. Empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance of Korean teenagers and their parents, and correlation between empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance, and effect of empathetic ability on multicultural acceptance were analyzed. Seventy teenagers and seventy parents were participated in the study. With regard to empathetic ability, the teenagers scored significantly higher in taking a view, imagining, and empathetic awakening than their parents. When it comes to multicultural acceptance, the parents scored significantly higher in in multicultural relationship formation, multicultural awareness, multicultural openness, and multicultural empathy than teenagers. Empathetic ability except empathetic interest was significantly correlated with multicultural acceptance. Teenagers' empathetic ability had a significant effect on multicultural acceptance. However, the effect of parents' empathetic ability on multicultural acceptance was not statistically significant. Since Korean teenagers have higher empathetic ability than their parents and have a great impact on multicultural acceptance, in order to enhance the understanding on multicultural society, education improving empathetic ability as well as education promoting multicultural acceptance should be complemented.

*Keywords: Empathetic Ability, Multicultural Acceptance, Teenagers, Parents*

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### 1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, multiculturalism became a natural social phenomenon as cultural mobility and population movement accelerated. Korea, which has long been proud of itself as a single cultural nation, is also becoming a multicultural society for various reasons such as international marriage and employment of foreign workers (Lee and Song, 2021; Park and Yu, 2017). In fact, the number of multicultural families in Korea due to international marriages is 16,177 as of 2020,

accounting for 7.6% of the total number of marriages in Korea. As of 2020, the total number of babies born in Korea is 272,337, of which 16,410 are multicultural ones, accounting for 6% of the total (Statistics Korea, 2021). The school-age population itself is continuously decreasing, but the number of students from multicultural families is steadily increasing. Along with this, various problems related to students from multicultural families have been reported.

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cannot fit well in with Koreans having traditional values due to their different appearance and culture (Kim, 2020). In addition, there are many difficulties in adapting to middle and high school life which leads to relatively low academic achievement and the college entrance rate. And more students from multicultural families in Korea tend to suffer from depression, low self-esteem, and psychological atrophy than Korean students, which may negatively affect their life satisfaction in the future. Therefore, helping students from multicultural families grow up properly, adapt well to school life, and enjoy fair opportunities is important in terms of social integration.

It has been reported that Korean's perception against multi-racial/multi-cultural society is relatively negative (Chung, et al., 2017). In terms of social integration, Koreans' negative perception against multiculturalism will be a critical problem in Korea's development. Therefore, in order for Korean students to positively accept such a multicultural society, it is important to cultivate multicultural acceptance that supports the social value of coexistence of various races and ethnic groups.

Multicultural acceptance is an attitude that recognizes different races or cultures equally with one's own culture without any prejudice and cooperates with them for harmonious coexistence (Ahn et al., 2015). An open attitude toward multiculturalism is essential to embrace cultural diversity and live in harmony with migrants from various cultural backgrounds amid rapidly changing modern society. Therefore, multicultural acceptance is recognized as a major variable in multicultural society (Hughes and Hood, 2007). While studies so far have mainly targeted adults, it is necessary to study the multicultural acceptance of adolescents, main players of future society. This is because positive attitudes toward other ethnic groups or cultures formed in youth are very important to coexist and live in harmony in the future.

Among variables related to multicultural acceptance, empathetic ability is very important as a key element of efficient communication in acknowledging differences from other cultures. Empathetic ability is to have an emotional state that is more appropriate for the situation the other person

is in than his or her own situation. Empathetic ability is to understand the other person's point of view, induce altruistic behavior, and further help social adaptation by improving pro-social and interpersonal relationships (Jo and Lee, 2010; Chung, 2010). Therefore, empathetic ability plays a positive role in open multicultural attitudes (Lee, 2017). Since empathetic ability affects interpersonal or social skills, it can be assumed to affect multicultural acceptance. It will be meaningful to understand Korean youths' current awareness toward multicultural society and to examine their empathetic ability as a psychological variable.

Parents are the most intimate blood relationship to humans and provide parenting and education to their children. In this process, they influence each other. The parent-child relationship is the most basic, intimate, and the basis for learning human behavior patterns (Kim, et al., 2018). Consequently, teenagers' empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance can be affected by the relationship with their parents. Therefore, by comparing empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance of teenagers with their parents', we will be able to evaluate the need for appropriate education at home.

In order to properly respond to multicultural society, an open attitude of acknowledging and accepting cultural differences is required. As for 2 critical factors, empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance, there are not many studies on the relationship between them so far. Thus I would like to identify a relationship between empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance.

This study attempted to examine Korean teenagers and their parents' perception against teenagers from multicultural families and to find out whether there is a correlation between Korean teenagers and their parents. In addition, this study tried to find out how empathetic ability affects on multicultural acceptance.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Study design**

This study is a descriptive survey study to understand an effect of empathetic ability on

multicultural acceptance of Korean teenagers and their parents by identifying the degree of empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance and analyzing the relationship between them.

## 2.2. Study population

From September 2021 to March 2022, an online survey was conducted on middle and high school students and their parents living in Seoul, Incheon, Gyeonggi-do, Gangwon-do, and Gyeongsang-do. They were asked to fill out a standardized self-reported questionnaires. Prior to the survey, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the survey method, response tips, and precautions, and distributed the Google questionnaire online for them to fill it out. A turnaround time to complete questionnaires was 10-15 minutes, and the survey was conducted anonymously to protect personal information.

## 2.3. Measurement Tools

The measurement tool of this study consists of a measure of empathetic ability and a measure of multicultural acceptance, and details are as follows;

### Empathetic Ability Scale

In this study, two test tools were used to measure empathetic ability: Davis's Interpersonal reactivity index (IRI) scale (taking a view, imagining, empathic interest) (Davis, 1980) and Bryant's emotional empathy scale (empathetic awakening) (Bryant, 1982). The questionnaire consisted of a total of 30 questions, which were composed of cognitive empathy and emotional empathy. Cognitive empathy included taking a view (5 questions) and imagining (5 questions), and emotional empathy included empathic awakening (15 questions) and empathic interest (5 questions). For each question, a 5-point Likert scale was used, with 5 points for 'very yes', 4 points for 'yes', 3 points for 'normal', 2 points for 'no' and 1 point for 'not at all'. It is interpreted that the higher the score, the higher the empathetic ability.

### Multicultural acceptance scale

In this study, the multicultural acceptance scale

for teenagers by Kim et al. (Kim and Jung, 2010) was used to measure multicultural acceptance. The composition of this scale consists of a total of 33 questions, four categories of multicultural relationship formation (15 questions), multicultural awareness (6 questions), multicultural openness (8 questions), and multicultural empathy (4 questions). Each question is a 6-point Likert scale from one point for 'not at all' to six points for 'very much'. Negative questions were evaluated in reverse order. The higher the score, the higher the multicultural acceptance.

## 2.4. Data processing and analysis methods

In this study, the collected data were analyzed using the SPSS 26 statistical program (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) to evaluate the relationship between teenagers and their parents' empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance. The analysis method specifically used in this study is as follows; The average and standard deviation of empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance were calculated in teenagers and their parents. The student t test was used to compare the empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance of teenagers and their parents. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to find out the correlation between empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance in teenagers and their parents. Linear regression analysis was conducted to find out the effect of empathetic ability on multicultural acceptance in teenagers and their parents. The significance level of statistical analysis was set to 0.05, and it was evaluated to be significant when the p value was less than 0.05.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Characteristics of subjects

Of the total 142 collected questionnaires, 140 copies (70 copies of middle and high school students and 70 copies of parents) were used for analysis, excluding 2 copies of the questionnaire (1 middle and 1 high school students) that responded insincerely. The characteristics of the subjects is shown in Table 1 and 2.

Teenagers who participated in the study were 39 male students (55.7%) and 31 female students (44.3%). They were 19 middle school students (27.1%), 50 high school students (71.5%), and 1 international school student (1.4%). There were 43 (61.4%) students living in urban areas and 27 (38.6%) students living in rural areas. The parents who participated in the study were 35 men (50%) and 35 women (50%). There were 53 parents (75.7%) in their 40s. Fifty six parents (80%) lived in Seoul.

Table 1. Characteristics of participating teenagers (N=70)

Variable		Number	%
Sex	Male	39	55.7
	Female	31	44.3
School	High school	50	71.5
	Middle school	19	27.1
	International school	1	1.4
Residence	Seoul	35	50.0
	Metropolitan	8	11.4
	Others	27	38.6

Table 2. Characteristics of participating parents (N=70)

Variable		Number	%
Sex	Male	35	50.0
	Female	35	50.0
Age	30s	2	2.9
	40s	53	75.7
	50s	15	21.4
Residence	Seoul	56	80.0
	Metropolitan	4	5.7
	Others	10	14.3

### 3.2. Empathetic ability and Multicultural acceptance in teenagers

As shown in Table 3 and 4, the average score of empathetic ability was 3.52 and the average score of multicultural acceptance was 3.26, thus empathetic ability was higher than multicultural acceptance. Among categories of empathetic ability, imagining was the highest at 3.64, and empathetic interest was the lowest at 3.25. Among categories of multicultural acceptance, multicultural empathy was the highest at 3.89, and multicultural relationship formation was the lowest at 2.94.

Table 3. Empathetic ability by category in teenagers (N=70)

Category	Related question	Mean	Standard deviation
Taking a view	16, *19, 22, 25, 28	3.51	0.58
Imagining	17, 20, *23, 26, 29	3.64	0.78
Cognitive empathy		3.57	0.58
Empathetic awakening	1, *2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, *11, *12, *13, *14, 15	3.58	0.51
Empathetic interest	18, 21, 24, 27, 30	3.25	0.44
Emotional empathy		3.50	0.39
Empathetic ability		3.52	0.41

\*Reverse grading question

Table 4. Multicultural acceptance by category in teenagers (N=70)

Category	Related question	Mean	Standard deviation
Multicultural relationship formation	1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 19, 21, 29, 30, 32, 33	2.94	0.60
Multicultural awareness	3, 6, 10, 13, 23, 31	3.66	0.66
Multicultural openness	5, 12, 14, 18, 20, 26, 27, 28	3.23	0.98
Multicultural empathy	17, 22, 24, 25	3.89	0.75
Multicultural acceptance		3.26	0.63

### 3.3. Empathetic ability and Multicultural acceptance in parents

Table 5 and 6 showed that all the scores of each category were more than 3 points, and it suggested that parents perceived empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance above average. The average score of empathetic ability was 3.53 and the average score of multicultural acceptance was 3.55, thus multicultural acceptance was slightly higher than empathetic ability. Among categories of empathetic ability, empathetic awakening was the highest at 3.76, and empathetic interest was the lowest at 3.04.

Among categories of multicultural acceptance, multicultural empathy was the highest at 4.23, and multicultural relationship formation was the lowest at 3.17.

Table 5. Empathetic ability by category in parents (N=70)

Category	Related question	Mean	Standard deviation
Taking a view	16, *19, 22, 25, 28	3.49	0.39
Imagining	17, 20, *23, 26, 29	3.35	0.54
Cognitive empathy		3.42	0.37
Empathetic awakening	1, *2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, *11, *12, *13, *14, 15	3.76	0.32
Empathetic interest	18, 21, 24, 27, 30	3.04	0.27
Emotional empathy		3.58	0.26
Empathetic ability		3.53	0.25

\*Reverse grading question

Table 6. Multicultural acceptance by category in parents (N=70)

Category	Related question	Mean	Standard deviation
Multicultural relationship formation	1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 19, 21, 29, 30, 32, 33	3.17	0.57
Multicultural awareness	3, 6, 10, 13, 23, 31	3.89	0.68
Multicultural openness	5, 12, 14, 18, 20, 26, 27, 28	3.66	0.85
Multicultural empathy	17, 22, 24, 25	4.23	0.64
Multicultural acceptance		3.55	0.59

### 3.4. Empathetic ability and Multicultural acceptance between teenagers and their parents

With regard to empathetic ability, the teenagers scored significantly higher in imagining ( $3.64 \pm 0.78$  vs.  $3.35 \pm 0.54$ ,  $p=0.012$ ), empathetic awakening ( $3.58 \pm 0.51$  vs.  $3.76 \pm 0.32$ ,  $p=0.016$ ), and empathetic interest ( $3.25 \pm 0.44$  vs.  $3.04 \pm 0.27$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) than their

parents (Table 7).

Table 7. Comparison of empathetic ability between teenagers and their parents

Category	Teenagers		Parents		p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Taking a view	3.51	0.58	3.49	0.39	0.812
Imagining	3.64	0.78	3.35	0.54	0.012
Cognitive empathy	3.57	0.58	3.42	0.37	0.067
Empathetic awakening	3.58	0.51	3.76	0.32	0.016
Empathetic interest	3.25	0.44	3.04	0.27	0.001
Emotional empathy	3.50	0.39	3.58	0.26	0.153
Empathetic ability	3.52	0.41	3.53	0.25	0.961

\*S.D. standard deviation

When it comes to multicultural acceptance, the parents scored significantly higher in multicultural relationship formation ( $2.94 \pm 0.60$  vs.  $3.17 \pm 0.57$ ,  $p=0.024$ ), multicultural awareness ( $3.66 \pm 0.66$  vs.  $3.89 \pm 0.68$ ,  $p=0.039$ ), multicultural openness ( $3.23 \pm 0.98$  vs.  $3.66 \pm 0.85$ ,  $p=0.007$ ) multicultural empathy ( $3.89 \pm 0.75$  vs.  $4.23 \pm 0.64$ ,  $p=0.004$ ), multicultural acceptance ( $3.26 \pm 0.63$  vs.  $3.55 \pm 0.59$ ,  $p=0.006$ ) than teenagers (Table 8).

Table 8. Comparison of multicultural acceptance between teenagers and their parents

Category	Teenagers		Parents		p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Multicultural relationship formation	2.94	0.60	3.17	0.57	0.024
Multicultural awareness	3.66	0.66	3.89	0.68	0.039
Multicultural openness	3.23	0.98	3.66	0.85	0.007
Multicultural empathy	3.89	0.75	4.23	0.64	0.004
Multicultural acceptance	3.26	0.63	3.55	0.59	0.006

\*S.D. standard deviation

### 3.5. Correlation between Empathetic ability and Multicultural acceptance in teenagers and their parents

In this study, the Pearson proper correlation analysis between empathetic ability, multicultural acceptance, and their categories was conducted. The correlation between the categories of empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance in teenagers is shown in Table 9. Taking a view had positive correlation with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.252$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.267$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.358$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.372$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), respectively. Overall, taking a view had positive correlations with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.346$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Imagining had positive correlation with multicultural awareness ( $r=.304$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.311$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.242$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), respectively. However, it had no significant correlation with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.215$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Overall, imagining had positive correlations with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.301$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Cognitive empathy had positive correlation with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.266$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.333$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.382$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.344$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), respectively. Overall, cognitive empathy had positive correlations with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.370$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Empathetic awakening had positive correlation with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.311$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.456$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.455$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), respectively. However, it had no significant correlation with multicultural awareness ( $r=.231$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Overall, empathetic awakening had positive correlations with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.413$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). However, empathetic interest had no significant correlations with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.099$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.094$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.016$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.061$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), respectively. Overall, empathetic interest had no significant correlation with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.075$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Emotional empathy had positive correlation with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.334$ ,

$p<0.05$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.254$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.453$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.465$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), respectively. Overall, emotional empathy had positive correlations with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.428$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Empathetic ability had positive correlation with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.336$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.316$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.466$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.455$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), respectively. Overall, empathetic ability had positive correlations with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.443$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Therefore, it suggests that the higher the empathetic ability, the higher the multicultural acceptance.

The correlation between the categories of empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance in parents is shown in Table 10. Taking a view had no significant correlations with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.107$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.284$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.157$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.103$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), respectively. Overall, taking a view had no significant correlation with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.0174$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Imagining had no significant correlations with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.056$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.107$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.018$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.119$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), respectively. Overall, imagining had no significant correlation with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.057$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Cognitive empathy had no significant correlations with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.098$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.228$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), multicultural openness ( $r=.070$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and multicultural empathy ( $r=.141$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), respectively. Overall, cognitive empathy had no significant correlation with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.134$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Empathetic awakening had no significant correlation with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.162$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), multicultural awareness ( $r=.209$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and multicultural openness ( $r=.225$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), respectively. However, it had positive correlation with multicultural empathy ( $r=.345$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Overall, empathetic awakening had positive correlation with multicultural acceptance ( $r=.238$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Empathetic interest had no significant correlation with multicultural relationship formation ( $r=.266$ ,

p<0.05), multicultural awareness (r=.051, p>0.05), multicultural openness (r=.135, p>0.05), and multicultural empathy (r=.047, p>0.05), respectively. Overall, empathetic interest no significant correlations with multicultural acceptance (r=.180, p>0.05). Emotional empathy had positive correlation with multicultural relationship formation (r=.080, p>0.05), multicultural awareness (r=.180, p>0.05), and multicultural openness (r=.172, p>0.05), respectively. However, it had positive correlation with multicultural empathy (r=.305, p<0.05). Overall,

emotional empathy had no significant correlation with multicultural acceptance (r=.173, p>0.05). Empathetic ability had positive correlation with multicultural relationship formation (r=.102, p>0.05), multicultural awareness (r=.233, p>0.05), and multicultural openness (r=.151, p>0.05), respectively. However, it had positive correlation with multicultural empathy (r=.275, p<0.05). Overall, in parents, empathetic ability had no significant correlation with multicultural acceptance (r=.182, p>0.05).

Table 9. Correlation between empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance for each category in teenagers

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	1											
2	.491**	1										
3	.820**	.902**	1									
4	.522**	.539**	.613**	1								
5	.234	.044	.145	.086	1							
6	.579**	.543**	.644**	.960**	.195	1						
7	.750**	.766**	.876**	.894**	.191	.933**	1					
8	.252*	.215	.266*	.311*	.099	.334*	.336**	1				
9	.267**	.304**	.333**	.231	.094	.254*	.316**	.705**	1			
10	.358**	.311**	.382**	.456**	.016	.453**	.466**	.785**	.653**	1		
11	.372**	.242**	.344**	.455**	.061	.465**	.455**	.665**	.617**	.634**	1	
12	.346**	.301**	.370**	.413**	.075	.428**	.443**	.941**	.944**	.918**	.725**	1

P<0.05\*, p<0.01\*\*

1. Taking a view, 2. Imagining, 3. Cognitive empathy, 4. Empathic awakening, 5. Empathic interest, 6. Emotional empathy, 7. Empathetic ability, 8. Multicultural relationship formation, 9. Multicultural awareness, 10. Multicultural openness, 11. Multicultural empathy, 12. Multicultural acceptance

Table 10. Correlation between empathy and multicultural acceptance for each category in parents

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	1											
2	.249*	1										
3	.711**	.858**	1									
4	.419**	.314**	.450**	1								
5	.094	.191	.188	.186	1							
6	.410**	.338**	.463**	.968**	.427**	1						
7	.624**	.647**	.800**	.874**	.381**	.902**	1					
8	.107	.056	.098	.162	.266*	.080	.102	1				
9	.284*	.107	.228	.209	.051	.180	.233	.713**	1			
10	.157	.018	.070	.225	.135	.172	.151	.732**	.671**	1		
11	.103	.119	.141	.345**	.047	.305*	.275*	.692**	.576**	.678**	1	
12	.174	.057	.134	.238*	.180	.173	.182	.934**	.831**	.899**	.791**	1

P<0.05\*, p<0.01\*\*

1. Taking a view, 2. Imagining, 3. Cognitive empathy, 4. Empathic awakening, 5. Empathic interest, 6. Emotional empathy, 7. Empathetic ability, 8. Multicultural relationship formation, 9. Multicultural awareness, 10. Multicultural openness, 11. Multicultural empathy, 12. Multicultural acceptance

3.6. Effect of Empathetic ability on Multicultural acceptance in teenagers and their parents

A linear regression analysis revealed that teenagers' empathetic ability had a significant effect on multicultural acceptance ( $R^2=0.185$ ,  $\beta=-0.443$ ,

$p<0.001$ ) (Table 11). However, the effect of parents' empathetic ability on multicultural acceptance was not statistically significant ( $R^2=0.019$ ,  $\beta=-0.182$ ,  $p=0.132$ ) (Table 12).

Table 11. The Effect of Empathetic ability on Multicultural Acceptance in teenagers (N=70)

Independent variable	Non-standardization coefficient		Standardization coefficient	t	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value
	B	SE B	$\beta$		(Corrected R <sup>2</sup> )		
Empathetic ability	-0.680	0.167	-0.443	-4.079	0.197 (0.185)	16.636	<0.001

Table 12. The Effect of Empathetic ability on Multicultural Acceptance in parents (N=70)

Independent variable	Non-standardization coefficient		Standardization coefficient	t	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value
	B	SE B	$\beta$		(Corrected R <sup>2</sup> )		
Empathetic ability	-0.425	0.279	-0.182	-1.525	0.033 (0.019)	2.327	0.132

**4. Discussion**

The study idea was emerged from my personal experience of participating in medical volunteer activities for multicultural families. Multicultural families in Korea are experiencing poor educational environments as well as health problems. Thus Koreans need to improve their awareness of multicultural societies. For modern people living in the era of globalization, multicultural acceptance that can respect the other's culture is essential for harmony and peace of mankind.

This study examined the role of empathetic ability among the factors affecting multicultural acceptance. In particular, the following problems were examined in this study. First, what is the current level of the empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance of Korean teenagers and their parents? Second, is there a difference in empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance between Korean teenagers and their parents? Third, does empathetic ability correlate with multicultural acceptance of Korean teenagers and their parents? Lastly, what is the effect of empathetic ability on multicultural acceptance of Korean teenagers and their parents? As a result, it was found that empathetic ability had a significant correlation with multicultural acceptance of both Korean teenagers and their parents. In addition, it was found

that empathetic ability has a significant effect on multicultural acceptance of Korean teenagers.

Korea has already entered a multicultural society, but the Korean people's awareness on a multicultural society is still low. According to the National Multicultural Acceptance Index (KMAI) conducted by the Korea Women's Policy Institute, Korea had 51.17 points, which was lower compared to the average of 70.89 points for the top 20% countries of multicultural acceptance (Korea Women's Policy Institute, 2012). This finding indicates that continuous efforts is needed for Korean to increase their level of multicultural acceptance. Furthermore, discrimination against multicultural families still remains, leading to the overall atmosphere of Korean society.

Previous studies have emphasized the concept of empathetic ability as a mind that understands, cares for, and accepts heterogeneous cultures without prejudice, and emphasizes the importance of empathetic ability for people from other cultures to promote cultural sensitivity (Kim and Sung, 2014). As such, empathetic ability is the ability to feel others' emotions and understand others' point of view (Lee, 2013). Hence, empathetic ability can be a good solution to promote multicultural acceptance. This study is valuable in that teenagers and their parents were surveyed at the same time, focusing on



the relationship between them. Furthermore, it is meaningful that the difference in perception against multicultural society was examined by comparing empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance between teenagers and their parents.

In this study, it was found that although Korean teenagers had lower multicultural acceptance than their parents, their empathetic ability had a significant effect on multicultural acceptance. Multicultural acceptance is the adaptability necessary to a member of a multicultural society. The high acceptance of multiculturalism means high probability on cultural diversity and integration of the community. Therefore, it is thought that the empathetic ability of Korean teenagers can have a positive effect on the attitude of appropriately responding to and accepting various situations and the adaptability necessary to members of a multicultural society.

This study has some limitations. Although this study conducted a survey of middle and high school students and their parents nationwide, it is difficult to generalize to all teenagers and their parents due to the small number. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a survey on a larger number nationwide in future studies. Furthermore, this study presented only empathetic ability as a variable related to the multicultural acceptance in Korean teenagers, but it is necessary to use it as basic data to develop other cultural understanding and empathy programs for teenagers by presenting more diverse variables and revealing their effects. Nevertheless, it is clearly meaningful to confirm that empathetic ability has an effect as a psychological factor affecting multicultural acceptance through this study.

## 5. Conclusion

Through this study, the following conclusions were made.

This study showed that there was a significant correlation between the empathetic ability and multicultural acceptance in Korean teenagers. This suggests that Korean teenagers' empathetic ability is expressed as altruistic behavior or pro-social behavior and forming friendly relationships with others by understanding their situations. Furthermore, the

higher the empathetic ability, the higher the multicultural acceptance in Korean teenagers, indicating that multicultural acceptance can be increased with encouraging empathetic ability.

Therefore, in order to establish a harmonious relationship with teenagers from multicultural families, education programs for adolescents should be introduced in school. In addition, empathetic ability is basically formed based on positive interrelationships with parents, so it is necessary to prepare educational programs for parents as well as students.

## Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my advisor Professor Kang at Chung-Ang University for supporting me to do my best.

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