



National Pride as a Part of University Students Opinions: An Example of Slovakian University Students

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Abstract

Presented text has theoretical and empirical character. The main aim of the paper is the analysis of the researched university students in national pride. In the theoretical part, there are definitions connected with the nation and its characteristics. One of the characteristics of the nation is national pride. National pride is an important part of nation's existence. Moreover, the nation's members are the next important elements of the nation's existence. University students are defined as a nation's members. In the empirical part, there are results of own empirical research. Empirical research was realized by using qualitative methodology. Data were collected by depth interview. In the research, there were 10 Slovakian university students. The analysis of the researched answers was realized by using open coding in the qualitative research. The results of the empirical research describe the areas of national pride in the opinions of researched university students as a part of national identity. In the conclusions of research, there are three areas of national pride of researched Slovakian university students – history, language and personalities of the Slovak nation. Described areas of national pride can create the prerequisites of the Slovakian nation existence by its members. This article is based upon work from COST Action CA22121, Rising nationalisms, shifting geopolitics and the future of European higher education/research openness (OPEN), supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

Keywords: nation, national identity, national pride, research, university students

1. Introduction

National pride is an important part of national identity. National identity also contributes to the existence of the nation. We assume that if national identity is an important characteristic of the nation existence, then it is necessary to characterise national identity of the nation's members. National identity is a typical characteristic of the members of a nation, and therefore it is necessary to research what constitutes national identity of the mentioned group. In characterizing national identity, we emphasize the subjective awareness of national

existence. It can be associated with the feeling of the national pride. The feeling of the national pride of nation's members can relate to the subjective belonging to the nation.

Since we can identify several nations in the world, the focus of our research is aimed on the Slovak nation and its members. The members of the Slovak nation are various population groups. If we focus in more detail on the individual population groups constituting the members of the Slovak nation, we consider the university student population to be one of the significant groups of the Slovak population. Slovak university students should participate in the existence of Slovak nation. The feeling of national pride as a part in belonging to the Slovak nation is very important in this context. For this reason, it is necessary to analyse in more detail how we can characterise national pride in the attitudes and opinions of the researched Slovak university students. The main purpose of the text is the analysis of the areas of national pride by the views of researched university students. The analysis of the views of mentioned group of people can be a prerequisite for the long-term research of the national identity of Slovakian people. According to the results of the research, we can assume the behaviour of the mentioned group of the people in connection with multiculturalism. The research objective identifies the areas of national pride in the group of researched university students. The areas of national pride are important for the identification of the nation's existence.

1.1 Nation and National Identity

In the context of the focus of our research, it is necessary to characterize the nation. The general definition of a nation is usually based on its characterization as a form of ethnic community and its individual members who are using the same language. They are living in the identical territory, using the specifics of the traditions of national culture and they have a unified national consciousness (Šrajerová, 2000). The nation is thus perceived as a collective identity. It is created by its individual members. According to Purevsuren & Bor (2025), nation is a community of people and these people are connected with the ethnicity, language, history, culture, traditions, way of life, and mindset. The existence of the nation would not be possible without the existence of the members of the nation. National awareness of belonging to a nation is therefore considered to be the most significant characteristic of a nation in our research. A unified national awareness can also be referred as national identity. "National identity is a shared solidarity formed among members of a group who, despite belonging to different social classes, place loyalty to the group above any other loyalty. Based on this common solidarity, a specific form of identity develops" (Pavlíková, 2010, p. 11). National identity is connected with the national feeling. "National identity, then, is how individuals perceive themselves as part of this group – feeling emotionally connected and holding beliefs about what it means to belong to that nation."(Gabrielsson, et al., 2025, p. 3). National identity is considered as a collective identity because the awareness of belonging to a particular nation is usually identical among members of that nation. If only one person were aware of his or her belonging to a nation, then the nation could not be characterized as a collective identity and its existence would be impossible. National identity awareness by the members of the nation can be based on the national pride. According to this, we need to define the national pride in more detail.

1.2 National Pride

We can describe the sense of national identity and pride because of deep, historically rooted societal conventions. These conventions emerge and develop over a long time (Dimitrova-Grajzl, et al., 2016). The existence of national identity and national pride is a result of long-

term historical and societal development. The existence of national pride is very important for the national identity of the nation's members.

National pride can be treated as a declarative indicator of national identity, which contains emotional (strength of feelings of attachment to the nation), cognitive (knowledge of one's national community and the nature of differences between one's own nation and communities described as foreign/non-national) and behavioural (attitudes towards one's own nation, evaluations of achievements and the level of satisfaction derived from belonging to it) elements (Wysocki, 2022, Bokszański, 2005). National pride is a part of national identity. It is very important to identify strength of feelings of attachment to the nation, knowledge of one's national community and the nature of differences between one's own nation and communities described as foreign/non-national and attitudes towards one's own nation, evaluations of achievements and the level of satisfaction derived from belonging to it. National pride can be identified by the upper mentioned characteristics. The characterised elements of the national pride can be investigated by the empirical research. They are very good example of nation's belonging. We need to know details about their existence in the opinions of the nation's members. Strength of the feelings of attachment to the nation is an emotional express of nation's belonging by the nation's members.

For example, nation's member can express that he or she is aware of his/her belonging to the nation. Cognitive element of the national pride can be a subject of the empirical research. We can research the knowledge of nation's members about the national community. The knowledge about the national community is often connected with the historical development of the nation. Additionally, the knowledge about the national community can characterize the nation by its traditions and habits. According to the cognitive element of the national pride, nation's member should see the differences between his or her nation and communities described as foreign/ non-national. For example, nation's member can say differences between his or her Christmas habits and Christmas habits in another part of the world. Finally, we would like to analyse the behavioural element of national pride. The behavioural element of national pride can be described as an existence of the attitudes towards nation's members own nation. It contents evaluations of achievements of the nation's members and the level of satisfaction derived from belonging to the nation. Mentioned evaluations can relate to the activities of the nation's members in the sport, politics, arts etc.

Mentioned characteristics of national pride must be a part of opinions of nation's members. Nation's members should be able to express their national pride by the mentioned elements. According to the Wysocki (2022), we can state that national pride "relates to the assessment of achievements and the sense of satisfaction resulting from belonging to one's own national community". The subjective feeling of the belonging to one's own national community is based on the national pride's existence of the nation's members. Moreover, the feeling of national pride is a significant part of the nation's existence thus "implies a sense of national bonding, as well as the existence of the very subject of this feeling - the nation" (Wysocki, 2022). The feeling of national pride of the nation's members determines the formation of national identity and it is a prerequisite for the nation's existence. For this reason, we need to specify the areas of national pride.

According to Müller-Peters (1998), national pride can be divided into two dimensions, in political-economic and historical-cultural pride. The dimension of political-economic pride involves a country's economic and political performance capabilities or achievements. The dimension of historical-cultural pride involves the achievements of culture and history. We can state, that mentioned dimension of national pride are very actual.

2. Methods

2.1 Aims of Empirical Research and Research Questions

The main aim of the empirical research was the analysis of the researched university students' opinions in national pride. If national pride is an indicator of national identity, then for members of the Slovak nation - Slovak university students, national pride must be part of their opinions on the existence of the Slovak nation. Detailed research of the nation pride is demanding for the time, and we would like to present partial results of this research. For this reason, we present researched elements of the national pride by the opinions of researched Slovak university students.

According to the aim of the empirical research, we defined the following research questions:

- 1) How can researched university students characterize the nation?
- 2) How can researched university students characterize the pride of Slovak nation?
- 3) How can researched university students contribute to existence of Slovak nation?

2.2 Research Method

The empirical research of the analysed issue was realised by the qualitative research. The advantage of the qualitative method of research is an in-depth and detailed analysis of the researched issue. The aim of the qualitative method of research is not to record the frequencies of responses or to verify the phenomenon under investigation (Hendl, 2023). According to the more detailed examination of the above-mentioned issue the qualitative research of investigating of the issue of national pride was chosen primarily. Our aim was not to verify the theoretical characteristics of national pride and therefore we used a qualitative approach. The use of a qualitative research methodology allowed for a more detailed analysis of the issue of national pride. However, within the focus of our paper, we conducted only a small-scale empirical investigation rather than large-scale research. More extensive research in national pride will be the topic of further research work by the author of the paper.

We chose in-depth structured interviews as our data collection method. The interview is defined as one of the most widely used qualitative research methods. Its implementation is pre-planned. During the implementation of the interview, the researcher conducts an interview in which he asks questions, and the respondent answers them. If the researcher prepares all the questions in advance and then asks them to the respondent, it is a structured interview (Gavora, 2010). In our empirical research, we have chosen structured interview as the research method. The advantage of the structured interview is less time-consuming because we had the interview questions prepared in advance, and we did not have to respond flexibly to the respondents' answers by generating follow-up questions. Our structured interview contained following questions:

- 1) How can you characterise nation?
- 2) Who are the nation members?
- 3) Who are researched university students proud off?
- 4) Would you like to contribute to the nation's existence?
- 5) How are you supporting the Slovakian nation's existence?

Open coding was selected for the analysis of the transcripts obtained and forms part of the grounded theory analysis. The open coding is the analytic process of codes' identification.

(Strauss, Corbin, 1999). The code in the qualitative research is a word that provides a summative attribute for the portion of a language based data. It is a process of naming (labelling) data as a categories. (Saldaña, 2016). A coding is defined as a technique leading to micro analysis of word-by-word data (Bryman, 2012). The micro analysis of the respondents' answers is very important in the open coding. The researcher analysis each answer of respondent and he or she is finding similarities in the analysis answers. The open coding is a first step of qualitative data analysis obtained by interview. According to the answers of respondents, the researcher creates codes and created codes define the content of the respondent's answer.

A more extensive analysis of open coding can be a prerequisite for developing a grounded theory for analysing national pride of university students. In terms of the scope and objectives of our paper, we have focused only on the initial open coding of the respondents' recorded responses.

2.3 Research Sample and Research Organisation

According to the topic of the presented text, we decided to research opinions of university students. Respondents of our research were university students from the selected Slovakian universities. University students were selected on the basis of their field of study. The criterium for the research sample was humanities focus of the university study field. We researched 10 university students. Selected characteristics of the research sample is recorded in the following table (Table 1):

Table 1. Research sample

Respondent Nr.	sex	age
R1	man	20
R2	man	21
R3	woman	21
R4	man	20
R5	woman	24
R6	woman	23
R7	woman	20
R8	man	23
R9	man	21
R10	woman	24

Source: own research

Our research was realised in one month (March 2025). Firstly, we defined theoretical background of our research by the scientific literature. Then we determined the aim of the empirical research, research questions, method of the research and research sample. The next step of the research was the selection of the research sample. We selected 10 university students who are studying humanities field of study in Slovakian universities. We have interviewed respondents for ten days - each student for one day.

3. Results

According to the upper defined aim of our research, we analyse our research questions by the responses of the respondents.

1) How can researched university students characterize the nation?

Researched university students state, that nation is created by the group of the people. Feelings of attachment to the nation are very important. It is the statement of the nation's

existence. We provide the example of selected answers and created codes as a result of the open coding analysis for the first research question in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2. Selected characteristics of the nation by researched university students

Respondent Nr.	Selected answer	Created code
R3	"... the nation is a group of the people for me. These people should to express – I am a member of the nation!"	<i>people</i>
R4	" People are very important for the nation's existence. There are differences between my nation and others."	<i>people</i>
R5	"In my opinion... Nation is a group of the people. Nation is not only one man or one woman... And... He or she should say that he or she is a member of the nation"	<i>people</i>
R6	"... nation is created by nation's awareness, it is very important..."	<i>awareness</i>
R8	"Nation is not one man, it is not one woman. Nation are people..."	<i>people</i>

Source: own research

The results of the first research question show that researched university students characterise nation as a group of the people. These people – members of the nation are aware of their nationality. We can state, that researched Slovakian university students define nation as a collective identity. This collective identity is created by people – nation's members. Moreover, we can see the emotional and cognitive element of national pride. Recorded answers identified knowledge about the differences between nations (R4) and the importance of nation awareness (R5, R6).

2) How can researched university students characterize the pride of Slovak nation?

The following table (Table 3) summarizes the respondents' answers and created codes as a result of the open coding analysis for the second researched question.

Table 3. Selected characteristics of the pride of Slovak nation

Respondent Nr.	Selected answer	Created code
R2	"... we had independent state. For example, the Great Morava was our first state unit."	<i>history</i>
R3	"In my opinion, we must be proud of the Slovak nation's existence – it is long time"	<i>history</i>
R4	"It is very hard to say. I am proud of the sport results of the Slovakian people"	<i>personalities (sport)</i>
R6	"... if I can talk with Slovakian people by the Slovak language – at the our country, abroad..."	<i>language</i>
R7	"I am proud of the history of the Slovak nation. Sometimes, our nation had hard times, we were a part of Austrian-Hungary empire, but I am very proud that we never give up, I am very proud"	<i>history</i>
R9	"... probably, historical development is important. We can be proud that Slovakian nation did not disappear..."	<i>history</i>
R10	"I am proud for the sport results of the Slovak athletes. It is important to representing our nation in the world."	<i>personalities (sport)</i>

Source: own research

Researched university students have a pride connected with the Slovak nation's existence. National pride is a prerequisite for the national identity existence. National identity is important for the nation. We can state, that researched Slovak university students showed, that they reflect on their (Slovak) nation's existence and they did not have a problem with the expressions about Slovak nation. They emphasised the importance of independent state existence for the Slovakian nation. It is a result of complex development of Slovak nation's history. History of Slovak nation is very important for its existence. Members of Slovak nation know, that independent state is very important in the historical development (R2, R7). The next aspect of the national pride is the importance of popular personalities. Popular personalities in the nation's existence can, for example, be nation's sport representants (R4, R10).

Respondents did not have a problem with answers of their nation pride. In the respondents' answers we can identify attitudes towards respondents' nation, evaluations of achievements and the level of satisfaction derived from belonging to it. For this reason, we identify the behavioural element of the nation pride in the opinions of researched Slovak university students.

3) How can researched university students contribute to the existence of Slovak nation?

The following table (Table 4) provides examples of respondents' answers and created codes as a result of the open coding analysis for the last research question.

Table 4. Selected answers in contribution to the existence of Slovak nation by researched university students

Respondent Nr.	Selected answer	Created code
R2	"...really hard to say. I want to speak Slovakian language all over the world, with my friends from another countries."	<i>Slovakian language using</i>
R3	"We must learn kids that Slovaks are proud of their existence...And they(kids)will be able to say: we are Slovaks..."	<i>educational process</i>
R6	"I said: I am proud of the Slovakian language using, so I contribute to the existence of the Slovakian language by using Slovakian language"	<i>Slovakian language using</i>
R7	"I do not know. Learning children something about our history?"	<i>educational process</i>
R10	"In my opinion, very important is own state, so I would like to participate in elections."	<i>electoral behaviour</i>

Source: own research

Based on the data in the table above, we can state, that researched university students can partially contribute to the existence of Slovak nation. The important ways of Slovak nation's persistence are using of Slovak language and educational process realization. In our opinion, the realization of the educational process about Slovak nation is very important for the national pride of nation's members. Especially, university students – future teachers would like to learn young generation about Slovak nation's existence. The using of Slovak language is the next respondents' contribution to Slovak nation's existence. It declares, that using of language is one of the basic characteristics of the nation.

4. Discussion

According to the results of the our research, we can compare our results with the result from the another researches with the similar topic. In 2024, National democratic institute presented the final report with the title "Youth Attitudes on Politics and Democracy in Central Europe". The final report summarized the results of the questionnaire research. The research questionnaires explored young people's attitudes toward the variety areas and one of the researched area was identification with the nation and with Europe and its comparison in years 2020 and 2024. The research was realised in Poland, Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia. There were 756 respondents from Slovakia. We can state, that 73 % of respondents in Slovakia identified with the nation in 2020 and 62 % of them identified with the nation in 2024. On the other hand, 73 % of respondents in Slovakia identified with the Europe in 2020 and 66 % of them identified with the nation in 2024. (National democratic institute, 2025).

In 2018, presentation of the research study with the title "Central Europe: Youth – Politics – Democracy (Public Opinion Research in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia)" was held in the Open Gallery in Bratislava. The study was a result of the international project "Attitude of youth to democracy and European integration" supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) of the United States. In the research, there were 508 respondents from Slovakia. The respondents were young people in the age 16-29 years old. In the research,

mixed design of research was used. Researchers realized focus groups with the 6-8 participants from Slovakia. The results show the importance of the independent state and “although some in focus group discussions note that their national identity is stronger than their European identity—surveys reveal that 74 percent are proud of Slovak history—they do not view these identities as clashing with one another“ (IVO, 2018). Mentioned results confirms the existence of national identity of Slovakian young people.

We can state, that young people are interested in the topic of national pride. The mentioned group of the people are particular pride of their national existence in the selected aspects. We can consider as a selected aspects of national pride Slovakian history, Slovakian language and personalities of the Slovak nation. Young people, especially Slovakian university students, may have a national pride in the mentioned areas.

5. Conclusion

The present text focused on research of national pride from the perspective of the researched Slovakian university students. The aim of the text was to bring a definition of national pride and analysis of the national pride in opinions of the researched Slovakian university students. It has theoretical and empirical part. In the theoretical part we defined nation as a group of people who are aware of their belonging to the nation. We consider the awareness of belonging to the nation as the most important characteristic of the nation. National belonging and the awareness of its existence by the members of a nation is a prerequisite for the existence of the nation. It creates a collective identity which is important for the continuity of national existence. In addition, we focused on defining national pride and we analysed its emotional, cognitive and behavioural elements.

In the empirical part, we realised empirical research by using qualitative methodology. We realised 10 structured interviews with the Slovakian university students with the humanities field of study. We were using open coding as a qualitative data analysis. Presented text brings partial results of the long-term research. We found that nation pride is a part of the researched university students with its emotional, cognitive and behavioural elements. According to this, we identified national pride of researched university students in three main areas. The researched university students are proud of the history of the Slovak nation, the use of the Slovak language, and the personalities associated with the Slovak nation.

Finally, national pride is a part of the opinions of the researched university students. Three presented areas of national pride of researched university students reflect on the elements of nation pride defined in the theoretical part of the presented text. Described areas of national pride are the prerequisites of the Slovakian nation creation by its members – Slovak university students. The research of the nation pride is a part of the extensive research of the mentioned area. Presented text presents only partial results of the nation pride research. For this reason, the research of the nation pride of Slovak university students will continue and we will create the grounded theory of the ways of nation pride expanding among Slovak university students.

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