
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Individual and Educational Factors Influencing Young People's National Identity

Dr. Agnė Šimkienė

Faculty of Business Management, Vilnius kolegija/Higher Education Institution, Lithuania

Corresponding Author: Dr. Agnė Šimkienė, **E-mail:** a.simkiene@vfv.viko.lt

| ABSTRACT

This article analyzes individual and educational factors related to the expression of national identity among young people. The theoretical framework discusses how national identity in contemporary society is shaped within the context of globalization, migration, consumerism, the media, and new forms of community, and is therefore becoming increasingly multifaceted and fluid. In this article, national identity is understood as a phenomenon encompassing objective, subjective, and emotional dimensions, and its formation is influenced by both an individual's internal self-perception and their social and cultural environment. The empirical section presents a quantitative study involving 395 ninth-grade students from Lithuanian gymnasiums. The study aimed to determine how the expression of national identity is related to gender, academic achievement, and attitudes toward school. It was found that academic achievement and a positive attitude toward school are significantly associated with a stronger expression of national identity, particularly among girls. Girls are more likely to exhibit correlations between higher academic achievement, more active participation in national activities, better knowledge of national culture, a stronger connection to their homeland, and national loyalty. In the case of boys, fewer statistically significant associations were found, but the cultural and educational aspects of school are also important to them. The study's results suggest that school functions not only as a space for education but also as a space for cultural socialization, where young people's national identity can be maintained and strengthened.

| KEYWORDS

National identity, individual and educational factors, young people.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 02 April 2025

PUBLISHED: 03 May 2025

DOI: 10.32996/jhsss.2025.8.5.4

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, the formation and expression of national identity take place within a constantly changing social, cultural, and technological context. The processes of globalization, migration, the expansion of the media, the rise of consumer culture, and the emergence of new forms of collective identity are altering the traditional premises of community belonging and prompting a reevaluation of the place of national identity in an individual's life. For this reason, national identity today can no longer be understood as a given, unchanging, or homogeneous form of identity—it is becoming open to more diverse influences, transformations, and tensions.

One of the most significant contemporary challenges to national identity is globalization (Khajavi ir Abbasian, 2011; Higgins, 2011; Caselli, 2012; Sharif ir Yarmohammadi, 2013). It expands the scope of social, economic, cultural, and informational connections, so that individuals increasingly live not only in a local or national context, but also in a global one. Higgins (2011) identifies the ethnic, technical, financial, media, and ideological spheres, which have a significant influence on the formation of identity. These spheres open up new possibilities for cultural understanding and interaction, but at the same time blur the clear boundaries between "us" and "them," between the local and the global, and between tradition and innovation.

In the context of globalization, processes of cultural homogenization are intensifying, raising the question of to what extent national identity retains its distinctiveness. Tomlinson (2002) notes that cultural experience, expressions of identity, and lifestyles are increasingly influenced by diverse forms of cultural interactions, overlaps, and transformations. This indicates that an individual's identity is no longer formed solely on the basis of national culture but increasingly intertwines with other cultural influences.

Another important aspect of contemporary identity formation is the influence of consumer society. Bauman (1992) emphasizes that in a consumer society, human identity is increasingly constructed through choices, symbolic signs, and lifestyle models offered by the market. Rubavičius (2010) describes this process as the "social chameleon" phenomenon, in which the individual is constantly searching for new forms of identity and combinations thereof. This situation can weaken a stable sense of belonging to a national community, as national identity competes with other, rapidly changing forms of identity.

Globalization also brings the concepts of cosmopolitanism and the "global citizen" to the fore. Daugirdas (2008) notes that in the contemporary global environment, the individual who is mobile and adaptable to various cultural situations comes to the fore, while Tomlinson (2002) associates cosmopolitanism with a broader sense of global belonging. This perspective encourages openness to diversity, but at the same time raises the question of how a connection with the national community is maintained in such a context.

Scholarly literature increasingly discusses new constructs of collective identity—hybrid, bicultural, European, or displaced identities. Čiubrinskas (2011) highlights displaced identities, which emerge in processes of transnationalism, where the sense of belonging becomes less tied to a specific territory. Such forms of identity indicate that in contemporary society, identity is becoming more flexible and multi-layered.

Migration and the formation of diasporas have a particularly significant impact on changes in national identity. Migration processes encourage a reevaluation of identity, as individuals find themselves living amidst different cultural systems, languages, and value systems. In such situations, national identity can be both strengthened as a means of maintaining a connection with the culture of origin and transformed into more flexible or symbolic forms of identity.

Virtual communities also play a significant role. Savicka (2006) notes that in contemporary society, a sense of community is increasingly built not on physical proximity but on shared symbols, language, and cultural experiences. Virtual spaces allow for the maintenance of national ties even among geographically dispersed groups, yet simultaneously create new forms of identity.

Given these processes of change in national identity, it becomes important to delve into the individual and educational environmental factors that shape young people's national identity, particularly by analyzing the role of school as a social and cultural environment.

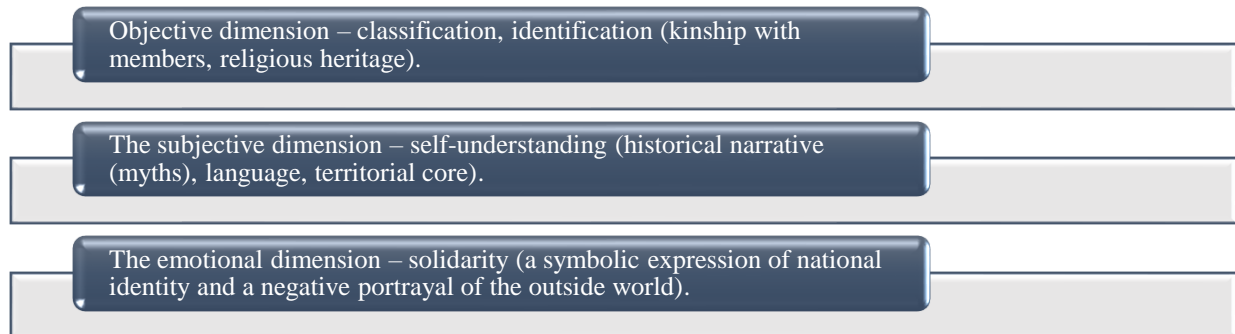
The aim of the study is to identify the individual and educational environmental factors that shape young people's national identity.

2. Literature review

National identity is a multifaceted social and cultural construct that encompasses an individual's perception of belonging to a particular national community, an emotional connection to it, the recognition of shared symbols, history, culture, language, and traditions, and an awareness of their significance. In academic literature, national identity is associated with a system of self-awareness, social belonging, and cultural orientation that helps an individual define their place within a broader social and cultural context. National identity is not a static given—it is shaped and transformed by the social environment, historical memory, cultural practices, interpersonal relationships, and changes taking place in society.

The concept of national identity is also closely linked to the phenomenon of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is most often defined as the tendency to value one's own culture more highly, whereby individuals or communities base their assessment of other cultures on the norms and criteria of their own cultural environment (Herskovits, 1948). This concept helps us understand that national identity is formed not only through a sense of belonging to one's own group, but also through relationships with other cultural groups. Nevertheless, the concept of national identity is broader than ethnocentrism, as it encompasses not only external cultural evaluation but also the individual's relationship with their community, its symbols, values, and historical experience. As Huntington (1993; 1996) notes, cultural belonging becomes one of the essential factors helping a person orient themselves in terms of values and socially. Keillor and Hult (1998) also emphasize that national and cultural identity is a significant foundation for an individual's behavior, attitudes, and orientations.

When analyzing the structure of national identity, the concept of the dimensions of national identity proposed by M. Vanderwerf (2009) is significant. The author distinguishes between synchronic and diachronic perspectives on national identity. The synchronic perspective allows for the analysis of national identity as a structure existing at a specific point in time, while the diachronic perspective views it as a historically evolving and changing process. In the synchronic analysis of national identity, several important dimensions can be distinguished: the objective, the subjective, and the emotional.



Dimensions of national identity (by M. Vanderwerf, 2009)

The objective dimension encompasses the characteristics by which an individual or group can be identified and classified as belonging to a particular ethnic community. These may include language, origin, place of residence, cultural traditions, historical heritage, religious or other symbolic characteristics. These elements often form the external basis of national identity and help an individual perceive their belonging to a particular group. The subjective dimension relates to a person's internal identification with a particular national community. Objective characteristics alone are not enough for a person to feel like a member of a particular nation—it is important that they identify themselves with a specific cultural and national community, and embrace its symbols, meanings, values, and shared experiences. This dimension highlights conscious identification, a sense of belonging, and the formation of national self-awareness. The emotional dimension defines a person's emotional relationship with their nation and community. It encompasses a sense of solidarity, closeness, pride, loyalty, unity, or even duty toward one's ethnic group. This dimension is particularly important because national identity is not merely a rationally understood phenomenon—it is also lived, experienced, and symbolically expressed. The emotional expression of national identity can manifest itself through respect for the nation's history, traditions, language, and cultural symbols, or through participation in national activities.

National identity is a multifaceted construct that encompasses objective markers of belonging, subjective self-identification, and an emotional connection to the community. Its formation is influenced not only by cultural symbols, language, history, or traditions, but also by social relationships, communal experiences, and an individual's relationship with themselves and others. This concept of national identity provides the basis for further analysis of its expression in contemporary society and within the context of school organizational culture.

Nevertheless, in today's global society, national identity faces a variety of challenges, yet at the same time it takes on new forms of expression. Globalization, migration, consumerism, the expansion of the media, cosmopolitan attitudes, and new forms of community weaken the traditional boundaries of national identity, yet simultaneously encourage its reevaluation, renewal, and the search for new meanings. In this context, it is particularly important to analyze which social environments and institutions can contribute to the maintenance and strengthening of national identity. One such environment is the school, which functions not only as a space for education but also as a space for cultural and value-based socialization.

Thus, CH. L. W. Elliott's (2012) model identifies the following levels of national identity formation: a) personal (internal); b) interpersonal (social); c) external; d) supreme (Fig. 2).

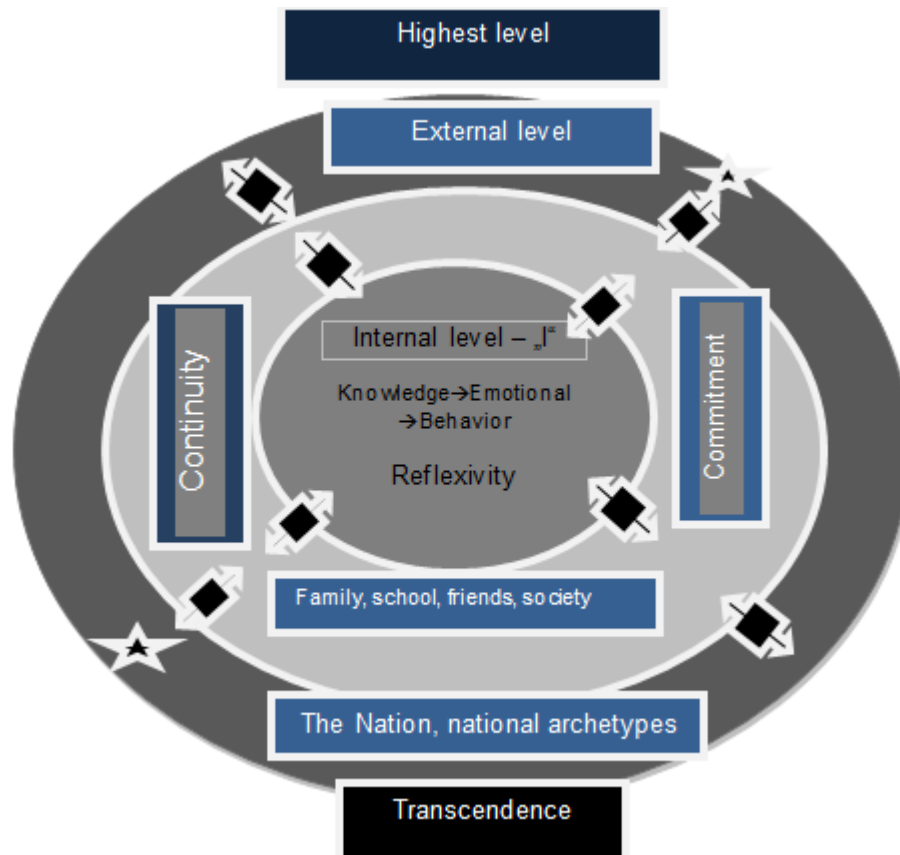


Figure 2. Model of National Education (according to Elliot, 2012)

It is evident that the formation of national identity begins at the personal level, which is linked to the awareness of one's own "self," where internal experiences merge with external information. This reflects the interaction between the individual and the environment, the formation of personality through the adoption of the national values dominant in society. The interpersonal level becomes a transcendent channel, as it encourages one to go beyond the boundaries of the self and directs one toward belonging to a community, commitment to others, and the sense of national identity and community built upon this foundation. The essential focus of the external level is considered to be the individual's transcendence of personal interests by embracing national culture and grounding one's behavior in it. This deepens belonging to the community, fostering continuity in social pursuits and a commitment to one's convictions and values. The highest level—the most external and abstract—emerges as a source of inspiration for the individual, as a direction toward which one moves. C. L. W. Elliott (2012) emphasizes that this level should not even be called a level or dimension, as it has no definitive boundaries. At this stage, the highest level of identification with the nation is revealed, where personal interests are no longer a priority, and one's life activities are grounded in the interests of the nation. This is the deepest level of national identity, associated with transcendence, transforming national identity into the person's very self—touching the inner world, where "only spiritual consciousness frees itself from the oppression of vital desires, and the more successfully it does so, the greater the knowledge" (Hartmann, 2001, p. 90).

3. Research Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design using a questionnaire survey. The study included 395 ninth-grade or first-year high school students. Respondents living in Lithuania were selected using probability cluster sampling, in which the entire population is divided into clusters, and a certain portion is selected from them using simple random sampling, with all elements of the selected clusters included in the sample (Bitinas, 2013; Rupšienė, 2007). B. Bitinas (2006) considers samples formed by random selection to be representative. The study identified 10 clusters (Lithuanian counties), comprising 16 general education schools (10 schools in urban areas and 6 in rural areas). To determine which factors are associated with the expression of national identity among young people, the following independent variables were analyzed: gender, grade point average, and attitude toward school. The following statistical methods were used in the data analysis: Pearson's chi-square test, Student's t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The Pearson chi-square test was used to assess associations between categorical variables, the Student's t-test was used to determine differences in means between two groups, and one-way ANOVA was used in cases where more than two groups were compared based on a single independent

variable. Multivariate ANOVA was used to determine not only the effect of individual independent variables on the components of national identity but also their potential interactions. Differences were considered statistically significant when $p < 0.05$.

3.1 Analysis of the research data

Analysis of the research data revealed that the components of young people's national identity are associated to varying degrees with individual and educational environment factors. Statistically significant differences were found based on gender, grade point average, and attitude toward school; however, their manifestation across different components of national identity is not uniform. The detailed analysis presented below reveals which factors are most strongly associated with specific aspects of young people's national identity (Table 1, Table 2)

Table 1. Map of factors contributing to national identity, as well as gender, grade point average, and young people's attitudes toward school (data for girls)

Girls		National activities			
Variables	The value of P				
Attitude toward school	0,045	A part of Lithuanian culture	Indifference toward school	-0,3038*	0,045
Grade point average	0,000	9-10 points	7-8 points	-0,1384*	0,012
			6 points or less	-0,4023*	0,000
		7-8 points	6 points or less	-0,2640*	0,003
Attitude toward school * Grade point average	0,021				
Knowledge of national culture					
Grade point average	0,000	9-10 points	7-8 points	-0,2512*	0,000
			6 points or less	-0,6230*	0,000
		7-8 points	6 points or less	-0,3717*	0,000
Attitude toward school	0,025	Relationships with peers and teachers	Indifference toward school	-0,2968*	0,033
		A high-quality educational process	Indifference toward school	-0,3424*	0,008
Connection to the homeland					
Attitude toward school	0,047	Relationships with peers and teachers	Indifference toward school	-0,2650*	0,041
		A high-quality educational process	Indifference toward school	-0,2652*	0,040
		A part of Lithuanian culture	Indifference toward school	-0,3401*	0,010
Grade point average	0,005	9-10 points	7-8 points	-,1881*	0,000
			6 balai ar mažiau	-,3058*	0,000
National loyalty					
Grade point average	0,001	9-10 points	7-8 points	-,1218*	0,006
			6 points and less	-,3332*	0,000
		7-8 points	6 points and less	-,2114*	0,004
Attitude toward school * Grade point average	0,031				
Sport					
Grade point average	0,039	9-10 points	6 points or less	-,2594*	0,044

The difference is statistically significant when $p < 0.05$

It was found that the average grade has the greatest influence on girls' participation in extracurricular activities ($p=0.000$); attitude toward school, and multivariate analysis allows for further detail, showing that girls with grades of 9–10 are more likely

to participate in national cultural activities than those with grades of 7–8 ($p=0.0012$) or 6 and below ($p=0.000$), as a statistically significant difference was found between these variables. Girls with grades of 7–8 also participate in national cultural activities more frequently than those with grades of 6 or lower ($p=0.003$). This indicates that girls' academic performance and higher achievement levels lead to more frequent participation in cultural activities.

Similarly, girls who view school as part of Lithuanian culture are also more likely to participate in cultural activities than girls who cannot name any positive aspects of school and remain indifferent toward the educational institution ($M = -0.3038$; $p = 0.045$).

Girls' better knowledge of national culture is determined by their grade point average ($p=0.000$) and their connection to school ($p=0.000$). Knowledge of national culture is better among girls who earn grades of 9–10 than among those who earn grades of 7–8 ($M = -0.2512$; $p = 0.000$) and 6 or lower ($M = -0.6230$; $p = 0.000$). Knowledge is also better among students scoring 7–8 than among those scoring 6 or lower ($M = -0.3717$; $p = 0.000$). It can be concluded that the higher the academic performance, the better the knowledge of national culture.

Similarly, girls who cite the high-quality educational process as a positive aspect of school demonstrate a better understanding of their nation ($M = -0.3424$; $p = 0.008$) than girls who remain indifferent toward school.

Positive relationships with teachers and peers lead to a better understanding of the nation than among girls who do not mention positive aspects of school ($M = -0.2968$; $p = 0.033$). Girls' connection to their homeland depends on their grade point average ($p=0.005$) and positive aspects of school ($p=0.047$). The same trend is repeated: students scoring 9–10 points differ statistically significantly from those scoring 7–8 points ($M = -0.1881$; $p = 0.000$) and those scoring 6 points or less ($M = -0.3058$; $p = 0.000$).

Girls who cite relationships with teachers and peers as a positive aspect of school differ statistically significantly from respondents ($M = -0.2650$; $p = 0.041$) who are indifferent toward their school. Similarly, girls who highlight a high-quality educational process ($M = -0.2652$; $p = 0.040$) and associate school with Lithuanian culture ($M = -0.3401$; $p = 0.010$) have a stronger connection to their homeland than those who are indifferent to school.

Girls' school loyalty depends on their grade point average ($p=0.001$) and on the interaction between highlighting positive aspects of school and grade point average ($p=0.031$).

Table 2. A map of factors contributing to national identity, as well as gender, grade point average, and young people's attitudes toward school (data for boys)

Boys					
Knowledge of national culture					
Variables	The value of P				
Grade point average	0,000	9-10 points	7-8 points	-,2391*	0,000
			6 points and less	-,6382*	,000
		7-8 points	6 points and less	-,3992*	,000
National loyalty					
Connection with the school	0,008	Relationships with peers and teachers	Indifference toward school	-,2329*	0,005
		A high-quality educational process	External factors affecting the school	-,1937*	0,048
		A high-quality educational process	Indifference toward school	-,2494*	0,003
		A part of Lithuanian culture	External factors affecting the school	-,2531*	0,033

The difference is statistically significant when $p < 0.05$

It is worth noting that neither grade point average nor the identification of aspects of school that students like has an impact on boys' participation in extracurricular activities. Boys' knowledge of culture is also influenced by their grade point average ($p=0.000$), as those who earn grades of 9–10, but not 6 or lower, demonstrate a higher level of knowledge about national culture ($p=0.000$); a statistically significant difference was also found between students scoring 9–10 and those scoring 7–8 ($p=0.002$).

Boys' knowledge of national culture is influenced by the emphasis on a high-quality educational process ($p=0.013$) and the emphasis on school as part of Lithuanian culture ($p=0.049$).

Boys who emphasize the quality of the educational process demonstrate a stronger connection to their homeland than those who emphasize external aspects of school ($p=0.034$). Boys' and girls' sense of Lithuanian identity does not depend on their grade point average or positive perceptions of school.

4. Conclusions

1. National identity should be viewed as a multifaceted and dynamic sociocultural construct that is shaped not only by objective markers of national affiliation, but also by an individual's emotional connection to the community and their experiences in social and educational settings.

2. The results of the study show that statistically significant differences were found when analyzing gender, grade point average, and attitudes toward school; however, the importance of these factors varies across different dimensions of national identity.

3. It has been found that academic achievement is one of the most significant individual factors related to the expression of national identity among young people. Higher grade point averages were more frequently associated with stronger national activities, better knowledge of national culture, a stronger connection to the homeland, and more pronounced national loyalty, particularly among girls.

4. The study showed that attitudes toward school are also a significant factor in the educational environment related to young people's national identity. Young people who associate school with Lithuanian culture, a high-quality educational process, or positive relationships with teachers and peers exhibit stronger dimensions of national identity than those who are indifferent to school or view it superficially. This suggests that the school environment can serve as an important space for maintaining and strengthening national identity.

5. The study results also revealed gender differences. The expression of national identity among girls was found to be more closely linked to both their grade point average and their attitude toward school, whereas fewer statistically significant correlations were found among boys.

Agnė Šimkienė, Doctor of Social Sciences (Education), Associate Professor of the Faculty of Business Management of Vilniaus kolegija/Higher Education Institution, Didlaukio Str., 49, Vilnius, e-mail: administracija[eta]vfv.viko.lt.; research interest areas: inclusive, multicultural education in higher and general education school, acquisition and development of general and subject competencies, formation of identity in adolescence.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9732-8616>

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Bauman, Z. (1992). *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
- [2] Bitinas, B. (2006). *Educational Research: System and Process*. Vilnius: Krona.
- [3] Bitinas, B. (2013). *Selected Writings on Education. Educational Research: System and Process. Ideas and Issues in Educational Research*. Volume II. Vilnius: Edukologija.
- [4] Caselli, M. (2012). *Trying to Measure Globalization. Experiences, Critical Issues and Perspectives*. Springer.
- [5] Elliott, Ch. W. (2012). *Authentic Masculinities: A Dialogical Narrative Study of College Men Exploring Gendered and Spiritual Identities. Doctoral Dissertation*. University of Virginia.
- [6] Hartmann, N. (2001). *An Introduction to Philosophy*. Vilnius: Pradai.
- [7] Higgins, C. (2011). *Identity formation in globalizing contexts : Language learning in the new millennium*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- [8] Khajavi, Y., & Abbasian, R. (2011). English language teaching, national identity and globalization in Iran: The case of public schools. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 1, 181–186.
- [9] Rubavičius, V. (2010). *Postmodern Capitalism. An Academic Monograph*. Kaunas: Standartų spaustuvė.
- [10] Rupšienė, L. (2007). *Methodology for Collecting Data in Qualitative Research. A Methodological Guide*. Klaipėda: Klaipėda University Press.
- [11] Sharif, M., & Yarmohammadi, L. (2013). Culture, National Identity, and Globalization between the Lines of Reading Comprehension Texts in Iran. *Linguistics and Translation*, 56.
- [12] Tomlinson, J. (2002). *Globalization and Culture*. Vilnius: Mintis.
- [13] Vanderwerf, M. (2009). National identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina part 1: A framework for exploration. *Featured Articles*, 1–10.