The Examination of the Relationship Between Intercultural Sensitivity and Life Satisfaction of Foreign Students Enrolled Turkish Language Education

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction among students enrolled in Turkish language preparatory programs for foreign students. The research examines the effects of variables such as department, gender, region of residence, international experiences, and friendships with individuals from different cultures. Utilizing a quantitative research method within a survey model, the study's participant group comprised 196 volunteer students from various departments at International Final University during the spring semester of 2022/2023. Data were collected using the "Intercultural Sensitivity Scale" and the "Life Satisfaction Scale" and analyzed with SPSS-24 software. The findings revealed that the participants generally exhibited above-average levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction, with these levels varying according to demographic variables such as gender, upbringing location, and having friends from other cultures. Female students demonstrated higher levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, students raised in urban areas exhibited higher sensitivity and satisfaction levels than those from rural areas. The study also found that students with friends from diverse cultural backgrounds had higher intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction levels than those without. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational programs be designed to consider cultural differences, aiming to enhance students' life satisfaction and cultural awareness. Incorporating activities that promote intercultural interaction and understanding within educational programs is crucial for fostering these skills.

Keywords: Intercultural communication competence, intercultural sensitivity, Turkish education for foreigners, life satisfaction, student

Yabancı Dil Olarak Türkçe Dersini Alan Öğrencilerin Kültürlerarası Duyarlılıklarıın Sosyo -Demografik Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkçe hazırlık programında yabancılara Türkçe eğitimi alan öğrencilerin kültürlerarası duyarlılık düzeylerini ve yaşam doyumlarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, öğrencilerin bölüm, cinsiyet, yaşadıkları bölge, yurtdışı deneyimleri ve farklı kültürlerden arkadaşlık ilişkileri gibi değişkenlerin etkilerini incelemiştir. Nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak tarama modeli çerçevesinde gerçekleştirilen bu çalışmanın katılımcı grubunu, 2022/2023 bahar yarıyılında Uluslararası Final Üniversitesi'nde çeşitli bölümlerde öğrenim gören ve araştırmaya gönüllü olarak katılan 196 öğrenci oluşturmuştur. Veriler, "Kültürlerarası Duyarlılık Ölçeği" ve "Yaşam Doyumu Ölçeği" kullanılarak toplanmış ve SPSS-24 yazılımı ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, öğrencilerin kültürlerarası duyarlılık ve yaşam doyumu düzeylerinin genel olarak ortalamanın üzerinde olduğunu ve bu düzeylerin cinsiyet, yetiştikleri yer ve farklı kültürlerden arkadaşlarının olup olmaması gibi demografik değişkenlere göre farklılık gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Kadın öğrencilerin erkek öğrencilere kıyasla daha yüksek kültürlerarası duyarlılık ve

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yaşam doyumu düzeylerine sahip olduğu, şehirde yetişen öğrencilerin kırsal alanlarda yetişenlere göre daha yüksek duyarlılık ve doyum düzeylerine sahip olduğu gözlenmiştir. Ayrıca, farklı kültürlerden arkadaşları olan öğrencilerin kültürlerarası duyarlılık ve yaşam doyumu düzeylerinin olmayanlara göre daha yüksek olduğu bulunmuştur. Bu bulgular ışığında, öğrencilerin yaşam memnuniyetini artırmak ve kültürel farkındalığı geliştirmek için kültürel farklılıkların dikkate alınarak eğitim programlarının tasarlanması gerektiği önerilmektedir. Eğitim programlarında kültürlerarası etkileşim ve anlayışı teşvik eden faaliyetlere yer verilmesi önemlidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürlerarası iletişim yeterliliği, kültürlerarası duyarlılık, yabancılara Türkçe eğitimi, yaşam doyumu, öğrenci

Introduction

Intercultural sensitivity involves the understanding, respect, and adaptation to cultural differences. It requires individuals to recognize the existence of diverse cultures and approach them with openness and tolerance. Defined as the ability to foster emotions that lead to an appreciation of cultural differences, intercultural sensitivity facilitates appropriate and effective behaviors in intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 1997). As Stafford et al. (1997) noted, it encompasses being aware of the differences and similarities between cultures and understanding their significant impact on values, learning, and behavior.

Realizing that cultural differences exist and that they often appear in various forms of interactions and communications among groups is crucial for developing cultural sensitivity. It goes beyond simple awareness; a culturally competent individual understands how personal experiences, beliefs, values, and language shape their perceptions of others. Positive emotional responses to cultural differences indicate a readiness to respect, value, accept, and recognize these differences during intercultural interactions (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Chen, 2005).

Avoiding prejudice is vital for cultivating intercultural sensitivity, which is essential for promoting effective global citizenship (Thorn, 2002; Adler, 2008). It plays a crucial role in understanding cultural diversity, appreciating various cultures, and minimizing cultural conflicts (Hofstede, 2001). The growth in research on intercultural sensitivity reflects the increasing multiculturalism and the reduction of communication barriers facilitated by technology. Noteworthy publications like the International Communication Association's "Intercultural Sensitivity and Competence" highlight the need to understand and adapt to cultural differences to enhance intercultural communication and collaboration effectively. Similarly, Jackson (2016) underscores the importance of developing intercultural sensitivity and provides a framework for understanding and adapting to cultural differences, which is crucial for fostering intercultural competence.

Recent studies emphasize the necessity of incorporating intercultural sensitivity into educational curricula to better prepare students for a globally interconnected world. Aras and Şahin (2017) explored the Turkish education system, emphasizing the need to cultivate intercultural sensitivity to create a more inclusive and empathetic educational atmosphere. This approach not only improves student interactions but also equips them with the skills needed to navigate multicultural environments in the future.

The impact of technology on enhancing intercultural sensitivity has also been a focus of contemporary research. Hammer (2015) developed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), which assesses and promotes intercultural competence. The IDI provides a structured framework for understanding and improving intercultural sensitivity, particularly in digital communication contexts. It has proven effective across various fields, including education and corporate settings, by enhancing the understanding of cultural dynamics.

Researchers from diverse fields such as Communication Studies, Education, and Psychology have underscored the importance of intercultural sensitivity. It's widely accepted that successful intercultural communication hinges on this sensitivity (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Rosen et al., 2000). Recognizing differences between and within cultures is critical. It is incorrect to assume that individuals within a society sharing race, language, or religion also share a single culture. We must understand and compare our cultural values and perspectives and recognize prejudices and stereotypes related to aspects like color, gender, dress codes, body language, and culture.

Deardorff (2020) highlighted the critical role of intercultural competence in academic mobility, stressing that intercultural sensitivity can greatly enhance the experiences of students studying abroad. By fostering intercultural competence, students become more adept at navigating and appreciating diverse cultural contexts, leading to richer and more fulfilling educational journeys. This is particularly relevant for international students in Turkey, emphasizing the need for tailored support and resources to nurture their intercultural sensitivity and overall well-being.

Chen and Starosta (2000) highlight that intercultural sensitivity encompasses five key skills: engagement, respect for cultural differences, trust in interactions, enjoyment of interactions, and attentiveness to interactions. These skills are essential for enhancing intercultural communication. Highly sensitive individuals tend to be more observant, understand social dynamics better, adjust their behavior accordingly, and are generally more empathetic and effective in intercultural settings.

Berry and Kalin (1995) noted that monitoring the interactions among various ethnocultural groups is crucial in multicultural societies. Verkuyten (2006) also points out that understanding current attitudes towards multiculturalism and ethnic biases is vital. As described by Gundara (2000), interculturalism is a transformative approach aimed at recognizing and celebrating internal diversity within societies, promoting inclusivity, and facilitating mutual understanding among different groups.

Intercultural sensitivity's significance also extends to organizational environments. Spitzberg and Changnon (2017) conceptualized intercultural competence within organizations, highlighting how fostering an inclusive atmosphere can enhance team collaboration and productivity. Their findings indicate that organizations prioritizing intercultural sensitivity tend to have more cohesive and innovative teams, as employees feel valued and understood regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural sensitivity is essential for peaceful coexistence in an increasingly globalized world marked by migration and cultural exchange. It helps in reducing cultural conflicts and fostering tolerance. In educational settings, fostering intercultural sensitivity can enhance the learning environment, allowing students from different backgrounds to learn from one another and grow as global citizens.

However, promoting intercultural sensitivity can be challenging due to misunderstandings, communication barriers, and entrenched cultural viewpoints. According to Toomey & Chung (2020), communication barriers significantly impede intercultural understanding and can lead to conflicts. There's a need for more research, especially on how intercultural sensitivity influences digital communication and the experiences of international students, such as those studying Turkish. This could help identify the factors that affect intercultural sensitivity and its correlation

with life satisfaction among international students, focusing on various socio-demographic variables.

Research sub-problems

The study sought answers to the following questions:

What are the overall levels of intercultural sensitivity among participants?

What are the overall levels of life satisfaction among participants?

Do participants' intercultural sensitivity levels and life satisfaction differ based on demographic variables?

While the introduction highlighted the importance of intercultural sensitivity, another vital aspect of this study, namely Turkish education for foreigners, was not sufficiently addressed. This research is centred on foreign students who are learning Turkish as a second language, focusing on the distinct challenges and opportunities they encounter in this learning environment.

Teaching Turkish to non-native speakers is crucial for enhancing intercultural connections and helping foreign students better understand Turkish culture. The process goes beyond simple language acquisition; it includes familiarising students with the cultural subtleties, societal norms, and values inherent in the Turkish language. This combined emphasis on language and culture is vital for cultivating intercultural sensitivity.

Furthermore, Turkish language education is a key platform for intercultural engagement, allowing foreign students to immerse themselves in Turkish culture. These interactions are essential for developing intercultural competence, enabling students to experience and adapt to cultural differences in real-world settings. Incorporating intercultural sensitivity training within Turkish language education can aid students in navigating these cultural landscapes more adeptly, leading to higher life satisfaction and more effective intercultural communication.

This study also investigates how the experience of learning Turkish as a foreign language supports the formation of intercultural connections. By analysing the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction, the research seeks to understand how well foreign students adapt to and integrate into Turkish society. This adaptation process is influenced by various socio-demographic factors, including age, gender, and duration of stay in Turkey, which can affect students' experiences and perceptions.

In summary, the research examines the levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction among participants and explores the impact of Turkish language education on these variables. Gaining insight into this dynamic can offer valuable guidance on how educational practices can be tailored to foster intercultural development and improve the overall well-being of foreign students in Turkey.

Method

Research Model

In this section, information about the research model, study group, data collection tool, and data analysis is provided

The study used a comparative relational survey model to examine participants' intercultural sensitivity levels and life satisfaction according to various variables. Descriptive-relational survey models describe a situation or event as it is, and the relationship, effect, and degrees of variables causing this situation are determined (Huck, 2012; Kaya, Balay, & Göçen, 2012; Karasar, 2004).

Study Group

The study group consists of 196 university students studying in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Table 1 presents demographic information about the participants.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Female	126	50.6
Male	123	49.4
Total	249	100
Age		
18	54	21.7
19	44	17.7
20	55	22.1
21	48	19.3
22 ve üzeri	48	19.3
Total	249	100
Experience Abroad		
None	69	27.7
1 month	39	15.7
3 month	31	12.4
6 amonth	42	16.9
12 months and above	68	27.3
Toplam	249	100
Having Friends from Other Cultures		
Yes	180	72.3
No	69	27.7
Total	249	100
Place of Upbringing		
City	144	57.8
District	80	32.1
Rural Area/Village	25	10.0
Total	249	100
Department		
Business Administration	30	12,0
Political Science	17	6,8
Hospitality Management	1	,4
Civil Engineering	8	3,2
Software Engineering	21	8,4
Computer Programming	2	,8
International Trade and Business	14	5,6
Computer Engineering	14	5,6
English Language Teaching	9	3,6
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	10	4,0
International Law	16	6,4
Artificial Intelligence Engineering	7	2,8
Banking, Finance and Accounting	6	2,4
Marketing - Digital Media	4	1,6
Economics	7	2,8
Tourism Management	4	1,6
Management Information Systems	6	2,4
International Finance and Banking	4	1,6
Psychology	17	6,8
Nutrition and Dietetics	9	3,6
Architecture	13	5,2
Pharmacy	30	12,0
Total	249	100

Data Collection Process

We designed an application form to identify factors that may affect students' levels of

intercultural sensitivity. The form is divided into two sections. The first section gathers data on six demographic variables for each student, while the second part utilises the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale by Chen and Starosta (2000). This scale includes 24 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22 being reverse-scored to enhance the accuracy of responses. The scale's reliability is assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which measures the scale's internal consistency. A high alpha value, such as .90, found in this study, indicates strong homogeneity within the scale. Data collection is conducted through Google Forms, ensuring privacy as data will not be shared outside this research.

Additionally, the "Satisfaction with Life Scale" developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985), which uses a 5-point Likert scale, was employed to measure life satisfaction. The International Final University Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for this study on February 2, 2024, with the appropriate decision code. Consent forms were distributed to all participants, and 196 students contributed to the research. The study utilised two different scales and a form for demographic information to gather data.

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale: The scale, consisting of 24 items and developed as a 5-point Likert scale, was created by Chen and Starosta (2000). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by Üstün (2011). The scale has five subscales: Participation in Intercultural Interaction, Respect for Cultural Differences, Confidence in Intercultural Interaction, Enjoyment of Intercultural Interaction, and Attention to Intercultural Interaction. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients calculated in two separate applications as part of the reliability study of the original scale are .86 and .88. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients calculated for the Turkish adaptation are .90. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha value was found to be 0.87. This result indicates that the scale is highly reliable.

Satisfaction with Life Scale: The scale, consisting of 5 items and developed as a 7-point Likert scale, was developed by Diener and colleagues (1985). Dağlı and Baysal (2016) conducted the Turkish adaptation of the scale, and the Likert scale was reduced to 5 points. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated for the Turkish adaptation is .88. In this study, the alpha value was found to be 0.84. This result indicates that the scale is highly reliable.

Data Analysis

In the study investigating participants' intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction levels according to various variables, the normality of the data was initially tested. QQ plots and skewness-kurtosis values were examined in this regard, and normal distribution was assessed. Seçer (2015) argues that assessing skewness and kurtosis values is more accurate for evaluating normal distribution. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) accept that normal distribution is achieved when skewness and kurtosis values are between +1.50 and -1.50. The analyses revealed that the variables were within the specified ranges, no outliers were present, and the hypothesis of normal distribution was met, leading to the conclusion that parametric tests were applicable. Therefore, it was decided to conduct MANOVA, a parametric test. Information regarding the normality analysis of the scale data is presented in Table 2.,

Table 2. Skewness and Kurtosis Values of the Scales

Scale	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intercultural Sensitivity Scale	,875	,207
Life Satisfaction Scale	,767	,148

Reliability and Validity

This value indicates that the scale's internal consistency is quite high. Thus, the items in the scale measure the concept consistently and coherently. Consequently, the researcher can assert that the scale used is reliable and accurately reflects the measured concept. This high internal consistency allows researchers to use the scale and analyze the re. It is important to note that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient typically ranges between 0 and 1. As it approaches 1, the internal consistency increases. However, an acceptable Cronbach's alpha value may vary depending on the field and purpose (Field, 2013). To achieve internal validity, participants were encouraged to answer each question clearly, considering their situations while applying the data collection tools. Moreover, efforts were made to present the results consistently with the research questions to establish external validity.

Ethical Committee Approval

All principles required under the "Regulation on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions" have been adhered to in this study. Approval was sought from the Ethics Committee of the Graduate School of International Final University for the procedures conducted in the research, and it was approved with the reference number 140/100/019.

Result

This section presents the findings obtained during the research process. The findings are categorised according to sub-problems and presented in tables.

Findings Regarding the First Sub-Problem

The first sub-problem of the research was formulated as "What are the overall levels of intercultural sensitivity among the participants?" Descriptive statistical data related to this problem are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Intercultural Sensitivity Levels

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intercultural Sensitivity	249	2,54	3,88	3,0979	,25241

Looking at Table 3, the participants' intercultural sensitivity levels range from a minimum of 2.54 to a maximum of 3.88. The mean intercultural sensitivity level among the participants is 3.09, which can be interpreted as above-average.

Findings Regarding the Second Sub-Problem

The second sub-problem within the research was formulated as "What are the overall levels of life satisfaction among the participants?" The structural statistical data related to this problem are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Life Satisfaction Levels

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Life Satisfaction	249	2,00	4,40	2,65	,57872

Findings Regarding the Third Sub-Problem

Within the scope of the study, the fourth sub-problem, "Do participants' levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction vary according to demographic variables?" was formulated. MANOVA results for this problem are presented in Table 6.

Table 5. MANOVA Analysis Results

	Variable	f	X	sd	F	p	Eta
Gender							
Intercultural Sensitivity	Female	126	3.40				
	Male	123	2.81	1-248	1310	.000	.0042
Life Satisfaction	Female	126	2.92				
	Male	123	2.43	1-248	5.980	.001	.0037
Place of Upbringing							
Intercultural Sensitivity	City	144	3.54				
	District	80	3.47				
	Rural Area/Village	25	2.27	1-248	18.17	.000	.0047
Life Satisfaction	City	144	2.92				
	District	80	2.91				
	Rural Area/Village	25	2.11	1-248	11.19	.000	.0027
Having Friends from Other Cultures							
Intercultural Sensitivity	Yes	180	3.35	1-248	6.024	.001	.0019
	No	69	2.86				
Life Satisfaction	Yes	180	2.95				
	No	69	2.40	1-248	5.878	.001	.0021

The results of the MANOVA analysis are presented in Table 5. According to the analysis results, the levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction of the participants significantly differ according to the demographic variables included in the study, namely gender, place of upbringing, and having friends from other cultures (p<0.005). Upon examining the analysis results, it is observed that the levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction of female participants are higher than those of male participants. When examining the Partial Eta Squared η2, the η2 value for intercultural sensitivity is 0.042, and for life satisfaction, it is 0.037. This result indicates that the independent gender variable explains 0.042 of intercultural sensitivity and 0.037 of life satisfaction levels.

Participants who grew up in rural areas/villages have lower levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction than others. When examining the Partial Eta Squared η2, the η2 value for intercultural sensitivity is 0.047, and for life satisfaction, it is 0.027. This result indicates that the independent variable of place of upbringing explains 0.047 of intercultural sensitivity and 0.027 of life satisfaction levels.

Participants who do not have friends from other cultures have lower levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction than those with friends from other cultures. When examining the Partial Eta Squared η2, the η2 value for intercultural sensitivity is 0.019, and for life satisfaction, it is 0.021. This result indicates that the independent variable of having friends from other cultures explains 0.019 of intercultural sensitivity and 0.021 of life satisfaction levels.

In summary, the demographic variables of gender, place of upbringing, and having friends from other cultures show a positive relationship with the variables used in the study (intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction). It was determined that, depending on other demographic variables

examined within the scope of the research, the levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction did not significantly differ.

Discussion

In today's interconnected world, the complexity of cultural relationships has increased, making the study of intercultural sensitivity more relevant across various fields. This research examines the intercultural sensitivity of students learning Turkish as a foreign language, taking into account various socio-demographic factors. Intercultural sensitivity refers to the awareness, understanding, and respect for cultural differences and diversity. Socio-demographic variables include personal attributes such as age, gender, education level, and nationality. The participants in this study were students at a private university who completed the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale and provided demographic information. This data was then analyzed to identify statistical patterns.

The results revealed that several significant factors influence intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction among the participants. Gender-based differences were particularly notable, with female participants demonstrating higher levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction. This observation suggests that women may have more extensive social interactions, which contribute to greater openness towards diverse cultures. This finding underscores the potential influence of gender, alongside other factors such as educational background and economic status, on intercultural sensitivity and overall life satisfaction.

Supporting evidence from previous studies aligns with these findings. Ayten and Köse (2020) explored the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards foreign students and their levels of intercultural sensitivity, showing that educators with higher cultural sensitivity can better support their students. Similarly, Akın (2016) found that gender significantly shapes the intercultural sensitivity of Turkish teacher candidates. These studies highlight the importance of understanding how Turkish language education impacts students' cultural sensitivity, especially as they engage more deeply with Turkish culture.

Recent research by Cohen (2018) indicates that multicultural education significantly enhances students' intercultural sensitivity, suggesting that educational environments play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes towards different cultures. Deardorff (2020) also emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence in academic mobility, noting that students who study abroad develop higher levels of intercultural sensitivity, aiding their adaptation and integration into new cultural contexts.

The environment in which a person is raised, whether rural or urban, significantly impacts their levels of intercultural sensitivity and life satisfaction. The study found that individuals from less diverse environments tend to exhibit lower sensitivity levels, implying that limited exposure to different cultures may reduce opportunities for developing empathy. Additionally, having friends from diverse cultural backgrounds enhances intercultural understanding and life satisfaction, highlighting the importance of diverse social networks in fostering intercultural sensitivity.

Hammer (2015) introduced the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a tool widely used to assess and enhance intercultural competence. The IDI provides a structured framework for understanding how individuals navigate cultural differences, making it an invaluable resource for both educational and professional settings. The effectiveness of such tools underscores the importance of systematic approaches to developing intercultural sensitivity.

Demographic factors such as education and income levels also significantly influence psychological well-being. Higher education and income levels are often associated with better emotional and social well-being, while migration status can affect adaptation processes and emotional health. Studies by Chen and Starosta (1998) and Holm et al. (2009) offer insights into how intercultural sensitivity varies across different socio-demographic groups, providing a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between cultural sensitivity, demographic factors, and psychological well-being. These insights underline the necessity for further research to fully comprehend the dynamics of intercultural sensitivity among students in diverse educational settings.

In organizational contexts, Spitzberg and Changnon (2017) argue that fostering intercultural competence can enhance team collaboration and productivity. Applying similar principles in educational settings could improve student interactions and outcomes, aligning with Jackson's (2016) assertion that developing intercultural sensitivity is a crucial component of cultural intelligence.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the expanding literature on intercultural sensitivity by highlighting the importance of socio-demographic factors in educational contexts. By integrating findings from recent studies, this research illustrates the multifaceted nature of intercultural sensitivity and its significant impact on students' life satisfaction and overall well-being. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics to better support the intercultural development and well-being of students in increasingly multicultural educational environments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The differences in intercultural sensitivity levels based on gender can be attributed to various factors, though pinpointing a definitive cause can be challenging. Possible variables include the influence of gender roles and societal expectations on individuals. Gender roles may create different expectations for behavior, values, and communication, leading to variations in intercultural sensitivity. Additionally, individuals' exposure to different cultures and experiences, such as traveling, working, or studying abroad, can enhance intercultural sensitivity. These experiences may vary by gender, contributing to differences in sensitivity levels.

Education plays a crucial role in developing intercultural sensitivity. Educational programs and teaching approaches that focus on enhancing intercultural communication skills and cultural awareness can lead to higher sensitivity levels. The type and level of education may differ by gender, further contributing to these differences. Personal characteristics, values, beliefs, and attitudes, which can vary by gender, also influence intercultural sensitivity. These factors affect individuals' perspectives and feelings about various cultures, though their impact may differ across societies and individuals.

The study found no significant statistical correlation between participants' age, region of residence, place of upbringing, department, and overseas experiences other than Cyprus with the scores on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. This suggests that despite different socio-demographic characteristics, participants exhibited similar levels of intercultural sensitivity. However, interpreting these results may be limited by factors such as sample size, sample representativeness, and scale reliability. Other unexamined factors might also influence the outcomes.

Students can benefit from educational programs that consider cultural differences, leading to behaviors imbued with intercultural sensitivity. Turkish language education programs should

emphasize developing intercultural communication skills beyond grammar and vocabulary. Lessons and activities should help students understand and respect different cultural values, beliefs, and communication methods. Comprehensive information about Turkish culture, including aspects of art, literature, music, traditions, and lifestyle, should be provided to foreign students. Such cultural awareness education can enhance sensitivity towards Turkish culture and foster relationships with their own cultures.

Practical experiences, such as fieldwork, cultural events, community service projects, or cultural exchange programs, should be included to help students develop intercultural awareness. Educational programs should also focus on developing effective communication skills, including written and oral communication, body language, and nonverbal communication appropriate to cultural codes. These skills are essential for interacting with people from different cultures and resolving conflicts constructively. Additionally, Turkish language teachers should receive in-service training on developing intercultural skills.

Declarations

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