

Examination of the Components of Cultural Intelligence in Gastronomy Students: The Case of Mersin University

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the cultural intelligence levels of students in the Department of Gastronomy at the Faculty of Tourism, Mersin University. The research is descriptive in nature and utilizes the Cultural Intelligence Self-Assessment Scale as the primary data collection tool. The sample consists of 228 students selected through simple random sampling from a total of 379 students enrolled in the Gastronomy Department during the 2024-2025 academic year. Data were analyzed using factor analysis for validity testing and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for reliability analysis. The findings reveal that students' cultural intelligence levels vary significantly based on demographic characteristics such as gender, foreign language proficiency, travel experience, and participation in international programs. The results underscore the importance of cultural intelligence in gastronomy education and suggest that enhancing this competency is crucial for achieving effective professional performance in international contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

In the dynamics of the 21st century, the phenomenon of globalization has led to increasingly complex and multidimensional intercultural interactions. In this context, the concept of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), which was systematically framed by Earley and Ang (2003), emerges as an important research area that requires an interdisciplinary perspective. Cultural Intelligence can be defined as the ability of individuals to communicate effectively in heterogeneous cultural environments, accurately interpret cultural codes, and apply this knowledge strategically. The four-dimensional model developed by Ang and colleagues (2007) which includes metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions not only strengthens the theoretical foundations of this concept but also provides a solid ground for practical implications.

The field of gastronomy is one of the areas where intercultural interactions are most clearly and intensely observed. As highlighted by Charoensukmongkol and Phungsoonthorn (2022), the level of Cultural Intelligence in gastronomic professionals not only affects their professional competence but also directly influences their competitive advantage in international gastronomic tourism. Therefore, the detailed examination of the Cultural Intelligence profiles of students studying gastronomy will make significant contributions to both academic literature and practical applications in the sector.

In the existing literature, the diversity of factors influencing the development of Cultural Intelligence stands out. Fee and Michailova's (2020) studies demonstrate that international experiences increase individuals' cultural awareness and enhance their intercultural sensitivity. Similarly, Iskhakova and colleagues' (2022) findings indicate that foreign language proficiency improves not only communication skills but also cultural empathy. Zhou and Charoensukmongkol (2022) argue that socioeconomic factors shape individuals' access to cultural experiences and indirectly affect Cultural Intelligence.

In the context of Turkey, the limited number of studies systematically examining the Cultural Intelligence levels of gastronomy students further enhances the originality and value of this research. This study aims to measure the Cultural Intelligence levels of students at Mersin University's Department of Gastronomy using the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) developed by Ang et al. (2007) and to comprehensively analyze the relationship between these levels and various demographic, educational, and socioeconomic variables.

The research findings reveal that the overall CQ score of the students is 3.87 on a 5-point Likert scale. This result indicates that the students generally have a high level of Cultural Intelligence, though there are distinct profiles within the sub-dimensions. Notably, female students were found to have significantly higher CQ scores than their male counterparts ($p < 0.01$), with this difference being most pronounced in the motivational and behavioral dimensions. Furthermore, students with international experience ($M = 4.01$) had higher CQ scores compared to their peers without international experience ($M = 3.74$), with the most significant differences observed in the metacognitive and cognitive dimensions. In terms of language proficiency, students who speak three languages ($M = 4.02$) scored significantly higher in CQ compared to those who speak only one language ($M = 3.31$), and this difference was statistically significant across all dimensions. Regarding socioeconomic status, students from high-income families (41,000 TL+; $M = 4.05$) had higher CQ scores compared to other groups, which can be explained by their greater cultural knowledge and diversity of experiences.

These findings support the arguments put forward by Moon et al. (2012) that international experiences enhance cultural awareness. Similarly, Engle and Nash's (2016) views on the role of multilingualism in improving intercultural communication skills are corroborated by this study. Additionally, the findings align with Thomas et al. (2008) regarding the impact of socioeconomic factors on the accumulation of cultural capital.

This study is expected to make important contributions to the development of holistic strategies for enhancing Cultural Intelligence in gastronomy education. Specifically, concrete recommendations such as increasing intercultural learning experiences, promoting student exchange programs, and implementing multilingual educational models can be seen as practical outcomes of this research. Moreover, the identification of new research areas aimed at measuring and improving Cultural Intelligence in gastronomy education represents a theoretical contribution of this study.

Literature Review

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is defined as an individual's capability to effectively adapt to and communicate in multicultural environments where interactions occur with people from different cultural backgrounds. In this context, the concept of CQ is recognized as one of the increasingly significant intercultural competencies, particularly in social and professional encounters that have become more diverse due to globalization (Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022; Ott & Michailova, 2018). In the theoretical model developed by Earley and Ang (2003), cultural intelligence is conceptualized as the capacity of an individual to succeed in unfamiliar or novel settings associated with cultural contexts. This capacity not only entails the knowledge of cultural norms and values but also emphasizes the appropriate application of such knowledge (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2022).

One of the most influential factors thought to contribute to the development of CQ is individuals' international experiences. These experiences support the processes of observing, understanding, and interpreting different cultural structures, thereby fostering the development of cultural competencies (Moon et al., 2012; Engle & Nash, 2016; Iskhakova et al., 2022). Fee and Michailova (2020) also regard international experience as a significant tool that promotes cultural learning by exposing individuals to foreign cultural environments. However, the concept of CQ has not been uniformly defined in the literature, which complicates its conceptualization and measurement (Ott & Iskhakova, 2019; Li et al., 2024).

Cultural intelligence is a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, behavioral, and affective components that enable individuals to exhibit effective and appropriate behavior in different cultural contexts. The four-dimensional model proposed by Earley and Ang (2003) categorizes the core components of cultural intelligence into metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral subdimensions. Cognitive CQ pertains to the individual's ability to acquire and comprehend knowledge about other cultures. Metacognitive CQ focuses on how individuals regulate their mental processes during intercultural interactions, including their levels of awareness and strategy development. Motivational CQ refers to individuals' interest in and motivation toward intercultural interactions, while behavioral CQ encompasses appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors exhibited in such contexts.

As an alternative approach, Thomas et al. (2008) define cultural intelligence as an interactive system of knowledge, skills, and cultural metacognition. In this model, cultural knowledge refers to what individuals know about different cultural frameworks; intercultural skills pertain to the ability to establish and maintain effective social

relationships; and cultural metacognition involves individuals' capacity to regulate their own cognitive processes. In this regard, cultural intelligence is closely related not only to the extent of individuals' knowledge of cultural content but also to how they process, interpret, and reflect this knowledge in their behavior.

In conclusion, cultural intelligence is a multidimensional and dynamic construct encompassing individuals' ability to adapt to different cultural environments, develop cultural awareness, and engage effectively in intercultural interactions. In the context of growing internationalization and intercultural mobility, CQ plays a critical role in both personal and professional development, making it a focal point of interest in both academic and applied research.

Method

Research Design

This study aims to assess the perceptions of cultural intelligence levels among students in the Department of Gastronomy at Mersin University's Faculty of Tourism. As the study seeks to describe the existing situation as it is, it is classified as descriptive research. A general survey model was employed, as it provides a systematic approach to identifying the current state of a phenomenon (Karasar, 2015, pp. 31–36). This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Mersin University with the decision dated 04.03.2025, taken during the 2nd meeting under decision number 58.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of 379 students enrolled in the Department of Gastronomy at Mersin University's Faculty of Tourism during the 2024–2025 academic year. Simple random sampling, a probabilistic sampling method, was used to select participants. In this method, each unit within the population has an equal probability of being included in the sample. As Büyüköztürk et al. (2011, p. 84) note, this approach "grants each unit an equal probability of selection, either with or without replacement."

Probabilistic sampling methods are characterized by their high capacity to represent the population accurately. However, due to constraints such as time, financial limitations, and challenges in accessing the entire population, a sample of adequate size was selected to ensure representativeness. In this study, data were collected from 228 students, representing approximately 60% of the total population.

The sample size was determined based on recommendations by Tabachnick and Fidell (2014) and Cochran's (1977) sample size formula. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2014), a sample size of 217 is sufficient for a population of 500, while Büyüköztürk et al. (2014) suggest that a sample of 218 is adequate. Using Cochran's (1977) formula, the appropriate sample size for a population of 379 was calculated as 190. However, the final sample size of 228 participants was deemed sufficient to represent the population with a margin of error of 0.05. As illustrated in Table 1, the sample of 228 students is considered adequate for population representation (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014).

Table 1. Sample Sizes for $\alpha = 0.05$

Population Size	p = 0.5, q = 0.5	p = 0.8, q = 0.2	p = 0.3, q = 0.7
100	80	71	77
500	218	165	196
750	254	185	226
1000	278	198	244
2500	333	224	286
5000	357	234	303
10000	370	240	313
25000	378	244	319
50000	381	245	321
100000	383	245	322
1000000	384	246	323

Data Collection Tool

In this study, the Cultural Intelligence Self-Assessment Scale, originally developed by Ang et al. (2007), was employed as the primary data collection instrument. The scale was translated into Turkish and adapted by İlhan and Çetin (2014) and has since been utilized in various Turkish academic studies using both 7-point and 5-point Likert-type formats (Gökalp, 2022; Mutlu, 2023; Hashimi, 2021). For the purposes of this research, the version adapted to a 5-point Likert scale by Yaşar and Gökalp (2017) was selected. This version comprises 17 items, organized under a single-factor structure, with response options ranging from "never" to "always."

The validity and reliability of the scale were established through psychometric analyses conducted during its adaptation. Factor loadings ranged between 0.85 and 0.91, accounting for 77.6% of the total variance. The internal consistency of the scale was determined using Cronbach's alpha, which was calculated as 0.98, while the composite reliability coefficient was also found to be 0.98. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was reported as 0.97, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicated a statistically significant result (Chi-square: 6127.716; $p < 0.000$). Confirmatory factor analysis supported the unidimensional nature of the scale, with factor loadings varying between 0.86 and 0.90. Fit indices demonstrated an acceptable model fit, with values of $\chi^2/df = 2.915$, GFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.97, AGFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.06, and RMR = 0.04.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement tool within the scope of this study, multiple statistical analyses were conducted. Validity was assessed using the KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. Reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient, composite reliability coefficient, and the Spearman-Brown split-half reliability coefficient.

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was determined based on the KMO coefficient and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. According to Büyüköztürk (2003), a KMO value exceeding 0.60 indicates that the dataset is appropriate for factor analysis, while values above 0.90 signify an excellent fit. In this study, the KMO value was calculated as 0.913, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a significant result (Chi-square: 5237.716; $p < 0.000$).

Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was employed to examine the factor structure. Initial findings identified a single factor with an eigenvalue exceeding 1, accounting for 86.14% of the total variance. However, Item 3 was observed to load onto multiple factors, indicating a cross-loading issue. Consequently, this item was removed, and a reanalysis confirmed that the scale retained its unidimensional structure, now consisting of 16 items and

explaining 87.61% of the total variance.

Büyüköztürk (2003) suggests that in behavioral sciences, an explained variance of at least 30% is considered sufficient. Given that the measurement tool in this study accounts for a significantly higher proportion of variance, it can be concluded that the scale is a valid and reliable instrument for assessing cultural intelligence.

Table 2. Factor Communalities and Factor Loadings of the Cultural Intelligence Scale

Item No	Factor Communality	Factor Loading
1	0.915	0.923
2	0.920	0.911
3	0.797	0.884
4	0.908	0.880
5	0.837	0.864
6	0.846	0.860
7	0.811	0.847
8	0.862	0.858
9	0.957	0.894
10	0.849	0.842
11	0.882	0.878
12	0.760	0.901
13	0.882	0.921
14	0.910	0.881
15	0.846	0.893
16	0.913	0.859

The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) presented in Figure 1 demonstrate that the scale under investigation comprises a single-factor structure, which exhibits a high degree of consistency. The factor loadings, ranging from .87 to .90, suggest a solid foundation for the scale's reliability and validity. The strong correlation between each item and the identified factor indicates that the components of the scale are highly aligned with the overall factor.

The factor loadings of the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CIS), particularly those of .87, .88, .89, and .90, underline that each item contributes meaningfully to the factor structure, and that each component of the scale is consistent with the overall factor. These findings reinforce the robustness and consistency of the scale's factor structure, demonstrating its high internal consistency.

Furthermore, advanced statistical techniques, such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis, serve as an essential tool for validating the reliability and validity of the scale. These analyses ensure that the scales employed in research yield reliable and valid results, thereby enhancing confidence in the accuracy of the findings.

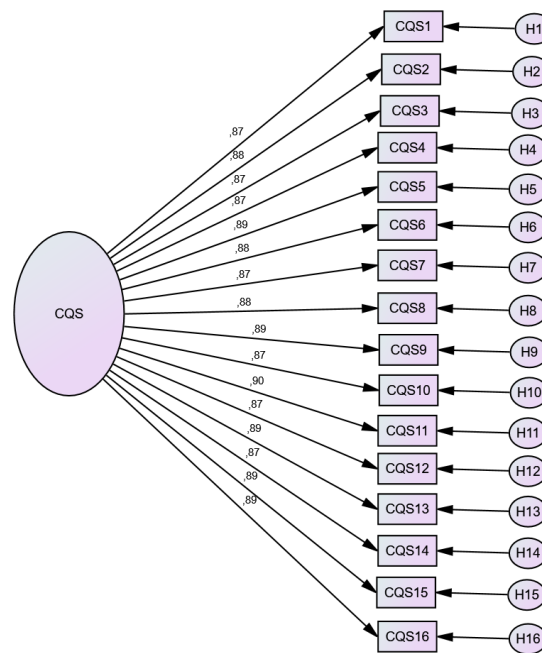


Figure 1. Factor Loadings of Cultural Intelligence Scale-Self Report (CQS)

According to the results of the single-factor Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the analysis of the model fit indices revealed a χ^2/sd ratio of 2.889, a Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) value of 0.93, a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value of 0.97, an Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) value of 0.91, a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value of 0.07, and a Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) value of 0.04.

These findings, based on the analyses testing the structural validity and reliability of the scale, indicate that the data collection tool provides valid and reliable measurements. The model fit indices presented in Table 3 provide a strong foundation for ensuring the scale's construct validity and reliability. The results further support the conclusion that the scale is highly valid and reliable.

Table 3. Model Fit Indices for the Scale

Scale	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	AGFI
	346.730*	120	2.889	0.07	0.97	0.93	0.91

* $p > 0.05$

The five-point rating system presented in Table 4 for the Personal Intelligence Scale (PIS) is designed to measure the frequency with which participants' behaviors occur at a specific level. This scale, proposed by Avcı (2015), systematically defines the score ranges for each option and the evaluation levels these ranges represent.

The score ranges are classified based on the frequency of behaviors exhibited by individuals at varying levels. The "Never" option corresponds to the lowest score range, 1.00-1.80, indicating that the individual rarely or never demonstrates the relevant behavior or thought. On the other hand, the "Always" option corresponds to the score range of 4.21-5.00, signifying that the individual consistently and frequently exhibits the behavior in question.

This structure allows for a more detailed evaluation of the scale, with specific classifications such as "insufficient level," "low level," "medium level," "high level," and "very high level" assigned to each score range. These classifications provide a clear depiction of the participants' performance. Such a scaling system ensures greater precision and objectivity in the analysis of data, serving as a valuable tool in determining the developmental levels

of participants.

In conclusion, the scoring range system developed by Avcı (2015) plays a significant role in the validity and reliability of the scale. By allowing the classification of participants' behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes at different levels, this system facilitates clearer and more meaningful evaluations.

Table 4. PIS Five-Point Rating Table (Avcı, 2015)

Options	Score Range	Scale Evaluation
1. Never	1.00-1.80	Insufficient Level
2. Rarely	1.81-2.60	Low Level
3. Sometimes	2.61-3.40	Medium Level
4. Often	3.41-4.20	High Level
5. Always	4.21-5.00	Very High Level

Data Analysis

Prior to conducting the data analysis, the dataset was rigorously examined for multicollinearity, normality, the presence of outliers, and missing values. These preliminary assessments ensured that the fundamental assumptions required for statistical analyses were met. The collected data was processed using SPSS 17 for Windows and AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures). Normality was assessed by analyzing skewness and kurtosis values, while linear relationships between variables were also evaluated.

Initially, normality was examined by computing skewness and kurtosis coefficients. The results indicated that these values fell within the acceptable range of ± 1 , which suggests that the normality assumption was satisfied (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). To further verify this assumption, z-values were calculated by dividing the skewness and kurtosis values by their respective standard errors. The computed z-values were 1.64 for kurtosis and 1.46 for skewness, confirming that the data followed a normal distribution. Given the normal distribution of the data, parametric tests such as the t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed for subsequent analyses.

Additionally, multicollinearity among the independent variables was assessed. A correlation coefficient below 0.90 was considered an indication that multicollinearity was not a concern (Büyüköztürk et al., 2011). Furthermore, the dataset was examined for missing values and outliers to enhance the reliability of the findings.

The validity and reliability of the measurement instrument were assessed through Cronbach's alpha calculations as well as exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The obtained values demonstrated that the scale was both statistically appropriate and effective for measurement purposes. Further details regarding the scale's psychometric properties are provided in the data collection instrument section.

To analyze participants' perceptions, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were calculated. The t-test was utilized for comparisons involving binary categorical variables whereas one-way ANOVA was applied for categorical variables with three or more groups. In cases where significant differences were identified, the Scheffé test was conducted to determine the source of the variation and identify which groups exhibited distinct differences.

Findings

Table 5 presents the demographic characteristics of the 228 students who participated in the study, covering aspects such as gender, age, total monthly family income, parental education level, geographic region of origin, and

the type of high school attended. The findings indicate that the sample predominantly consists of female participants, who account for 65.8% of the total, while male participants constitute 34.2%. This distribution reveals a notable gender imbalance in favor of female respondents.

Regarding age distribution, the majority of participants (51.3%) are aged 21 and older, while 25.9% are 21 years old, 14% are 20 years old, 7.9% are 19 years old, and only 0.9% are 18 years old. This suggests that most respondents belong to older age groups, reflecting the general age composition of the study population. In terms of total monthly family income, 69.7% of participants come from families earning between 17,000 and 40,000 TL per month, whereas 30.2% report a family income of 41,000 TL or higher. These figures indicate that the majority of respondents belong to middle-income households.

The analysis of parental education levels reveals that 37.7% of participants' mothers have completed primary school, 24.1% have attained a high school diploma, 21.9% have completed secondary school, and 16.2% have pursued higher education. Similarly, among fathers, 33.3% have completed primary school, 31.1% have a high school diploma, 17.9% hold a higher education degree, and 17.5% have completed secondary school. These findings suggest that parental educational attainment is predominantly at the primary or secondary level.

The geographic distribution of participants indicates that the highest proportion (30.2%) originates from the Mediterranean Region, followed by the Southeastern Anatolia Region (21.1%), Eastern Anatolia Region (17.5%), Aegean Region (13.5%), Central Anatolia Region (7.89%), Black Sea Region (7.45%), and Marmara Region (2.19%). The relatively high representation of individuals from the Mediterranean Region is consistent with the geographical scope of the study.

Regarding the type of high school attended, the majority of participants (57.8%) graduated from Anatolian High Schools, while 17.9% attended Vocational High Schools, 10.5% studied at Social Sciences High Schools, 7.89% at Tourism Vocational High Schools, 4.82% at other types of high schools, and 1.75% at Science High Schools. The predominance of Anatolian High School graduates reflects the widespread prevalence of this type of secondary education within the broader educational system.

In conclusion, the demographic characteristics of the sample demonstrate its diversity and representativeness. The distributions in terms of gender, age, and geographic origin suggest that the participant group possesses a heterogeneous structure, which enhances the robustness and generalizability of the study's findings.

Table 5. Demographic Information of Participants

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	78	34.2
	Female	150	65.8
Age	18	2	0.9
	19	18	7.9
	20	32	14.0
	21	59	25.9
	21 and above	117	51.3
	17,000-40,000 TL	159	69.7
Total Monthly Family Income	41,000 TL and above	69	30.2

Table 5. Demographic Information of Participants (cont.)

Mother's Education Level	Primary School	86	37.7
	Secondary School	50	21.9
	High School	55	24.1
	Higher Education	37	16.2
Father's Education Level	Primary School	76	33.3
	Secondary School	40	17.5
	High School	71	31.1
	Higher Education	41	17.9
Region of Origin	Marmara	5	2.19
	Aegean	31	13.5
	Mediterranean	69	30.2
	Central Anatolia	18	7.89
	Black Sea	17	7.45
	Eastern Anatolia	40	17.5
	Southeastern Anatolia	48	21.1
High School Type	Anatolian High School	132	57.8
	Vocational High School	41	17.9
	Tourism Vocational High School	18	7.89
	Social Sciences High School	24	10.5
	Science High School	4	1.75
	Other	11	4.82
Total		228	100.0

Table 6 presents the arithmetic means and standard deviations for 16 items assessing participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels. Overall, the participants' perceptions of cultural intelligence have been evaluated with a high mean score.

In particular, the perception related to item 9, "I feel confident in my ability to blend in when encountering people from a foreign culture," stands out with a high mean of 4.11. This result indicates that participants are confident in their cultural interactions and enjoy such exchanges. Similarly, item 8, "I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures," also shows a high mean of 4.07, reflecting participants' interest in cultural diversity.

However, item 4, "I know the rules of other languages (e.g., vocabulary, grammar)," shows a lower mean of 3.40, indicating that participants' perceptions of their linguistic knowledge are weaker. Additionally, item 5, "I know the religious beliefs and cultural values of other cultures," with a mean of 3.59, reflects participants' relatively high perceptions of their cultural knowledge.

Overall, it can be observed that participants' perceptions of cultural intelligence are high, with a mean of 3.87. The standard deviation values further suggest that the data is generally consistent and that participants' perceptions are closely aligned. The lowest standard deviation value, 0.70, corresponds to item 15, "I can adjust my non-verbal behavior according to the requirements of intercultural interaction," indicating that participants' perceptions of their ability to adjust non-verbal behavior in cultural interactions are more closely related.

In conclusion, it can be stated that participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels are generally positive and high. These findings highlight participants' strong perceptions of their ability to engage in cultural interactions and adapt to different cultures.

Table 6. Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Participants' Perceptions of Their Cultural Intelligence Levels

Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. I am aware of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.	228	3.96	0.92
2. I adjust my cultural knowledge when interacting with people from a foreign culture.	228	3.91	0.97
3. I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge when interacting with people from different cultures.	228	3.89	0.85
4. I know the rules of other languages (e.g., vocabulary, grammar).	228	3.40	0.90
5. I know the religious beliefs and cultural values of other cultures.	228	3.59	0.83
6. I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.	228	3.65	0.87
7. I know how people from other cultures express non-verbal behaviors (e.g., gestures and facial expressions).	228	3.83	0.84
8. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	228	4.07	0.76
9. I feel confident in my ability to blend in when encountering people from a foreign culture.	228	4.11	0.77
10. I feel confident in my ability to cope with the stress of adapting to a new culture.	228	3.94	0.82
11. I enjoy living in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	228	3.92	0.75
12. I adjust my speaking behaviors (e.g., tone, accent) according to the requirements of intercultural communication.	228	4.03	0.84
13. I pause or remain silent when necessary to adapt to intercultural situations.	228	3.84	0.74
14. I can change my speaking speed according to the requirements of intercultural interaction.	228	3.87	0.84
15. I can change my non-verbal behaviors according to the requirements of intercultural interaction.	228	3.92	0.70
16. I can change my facial expressions according to the requirements of intercultural interaction.	228	4.06	0.86
Overall Mean		3.87	

Table 7 presents the results of the t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on gender. According to the results, a significant difference was found based on the gender variable [$t(226) = 13.644$; $p < .01$]. The mean scores of participants' perceptions vary significantly according to gender. The mean perception score for male participants regarding their cultural intelligence level is ($M = 3.39$), while the mean score for female participants is ($M = 3.97$).

The mean perception score for female participants is higher than that of male participants. Female participants tend to perceive themselves as having a higher level of cultural intelligence, with their scores typically falling within the "often" range, while male participants' perceptions generally fall within the "sometimes" range. In other words, female participants perceive themselves as having a higher level of cultural intelligence compared to male participants and engage more frequently in higher-order cognitive, behavioral, motivational, and metacognitive actions related to cultural intelligence.

The overall average cultural intelligence level for female participants is higher than that of male participants, indicating that female students have a higher level of cultural intelligence compared to their male counterparts.

Table 7. Descriptive Findings and T-test Results Regarding Students' Perceptions of Cultural Intelligence Levels Based on Gender

Variable: Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	p
Male	78	3.39	0.546	13.644	0.000**
Female	150	3.97	0.394		

* **p<0.01

The third sub-problem of the study is phrased as, "Is there a significant difference in participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on the number of foreign languages they know?" The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) results conducted to answer this question reveal a significant difference in participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on their foreign language knowledge.

According to the findings in Table 8, there is a significant difference in participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on the number of foreign languages they know ($F: 2.329$; $df: 2, 225$; $p < 0.01$). Participants who know three or more foreign languages have a perception of cultural intelligence ($M = 4.02$), categorized as "often." Participants who know two foreign languages have a perception of cultural intelligence ($M = 3.47$), also categorized as "often." Participants who know one foreign language have a perception of cultural intelligence ($M = 3.31$), categorized as "sometimes." In other words, according to participants' perceptions, those who know three or more foreign languages, as well as those who know two languages, perceive themselves as having cultural intelligence at the "often" level, while those who know one foreign language perceive themselves as having cultural intelligence at the "sometimes" level.

To determine the source of the difference among participants' perceptions, a Scheffe test was conducted. The results of the Scheffe test revealed that participants who know three or more foreign languages contribute to the source of the difference. Participants who know three or more foreign languages perceive themselves as having a high level of cultural intelligence, while participants who know two foreign languages perceive themselves as having an intermediate level of cultural intelligence, and those who know one foreign language also perceive themselves as having an intermediate level of cultural intelligence. It is evident that as the number of languages known by participants increases, their perceived level of cultural intelligence also rises.

Table 8. Descriptive Findings and ANOVA Test Results Regarding Participants' Perceptions of Cultural Intelligence Levels Based on the Number of Foreign Languages Known

Variable: Foreign Language	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	p	Significant Difference (Scheffe Test)
(1) 1 foreign language	101	3.31	0.434	2.329	0.000**	1-3; 2-3
(2) 2 foreign languages	79	3.47	0.463			
(3) 3 or more foreign languages	58	4.02	0.432			

*Source of Difference (Scheffe Test) **p < 0.01

The fourth sub-question of the study is formulated as, "Is there a significant difference in participants' perceptions of cultural intelligence levels based on the variable of having lived abroad?" Table 9 presents the results of the t-test conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in participants' perceptions of cultural intelligence levels based on their experience of living abroad. According to the results, there is a significant difference in terms of the variable of having lived abroad [$t(226) = 12.411$; $p < 0.01$]. The mean scores of participants' perceptions based on their living abroad experience show a significant difference. The findings indicate that the mean score of

participants who have lived abroad ($M = 4.01$) is higher than that of participants who have not lived abroad ($M = 3.74$). Participants who have lived abroad perceive themselves as having a higher level of cultural intelligence and believe they engage more in metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational actions and behaviors related to cultural intelligence. This indicates that participants who have lived abroad have a higher level of cultural intelligence compared to those who have not.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics and T-test Results on Participants' Perceptions of Cultural Intelligence Levels According to the Variable of Living Abroad

Variable: Living Abroad	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (ss)	t	p
Lived Abroad	163	4.01	0.398	12.411	0.000**
Did Not Live Abroad	65	3.74	0.540		

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

In Table 10, the results of the t-test conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in participants' perceptions of cultural intelligence levels based on their participation in international projects within European Union (EU) Programs are presented. According to these results, a significant difference was found based on the participation in EU programs ($t(226) = 30.964$; $p < 0.01$).

The mean scores of participants' perceptions of cultural intelligence levels significantly differ according to their involvement in EU programs. Specifically, the average perception score of participants who participated in EU international projects is 4.21, while the average perception score of those who did not participate is 3.69. The mean score of participants involved in international projects within EU programs is higher than that of those not involved.

Moreover, the mean perception score of participants engaged in EU programs consistently falls within the "always" range, whereas the mean score of those not involved in these programs lies within the "sometimes" range. In other words, participants who have participated in EU international projects perceive themselves as possessing a higher level of cultural intelligence, demonstrating more frequent engagement in metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational actions and behaviors related to cultural intelligence, compared to participants who have not participated.

Table 10. Descriptive Findings and T-Test Results on Participants' Perceptions of Cultural Intelligence Levels Based on Participation in International Projects in EU Programs

Variable: Participation in International Projects in EU Programs	N	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	t-value	p-value
Participated	63	4.21	0.126	16.546	0.000**
Did Not Participate	165	3.69	0.457		

* ** $p < 0.01$

Table 11 presents the descriptive findings and ANOVA test results regarding participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels according to the number of books by foreign authors read in a year. The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) show a significant difference in participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on the number of books by foreign authors they read in a year ($F: 2.290$; $df: (2-225)$; $p < 0.01$).

Participants who read 11 or more books have a mean perception of cultural intelligence of ($M = 4.21$), which falls under the "Always" category. Participants who read between 1 and 10 books have a mean perception of ($M = 3.74$), categorized as "Often." Participants who read no books have a mean perception of ($M = 3.55$), also categorized as

"Often." In other words, participants who read 11 or more books perceive themselves as possessing cultural intelligence at the "Always" level, while those who read between 1 and 10 books or none perceive themselves at the "Often" level.

To determine the source of the difference between participants' perceptions, a Scheffe test was conducted. The Scheffe test revealed that participants who read 11 or more books were the source of the difference. These participants perceive themselves as possessing a very high level of cultural intelligence, while those who read between 1 and 10 books, or no books at all, perceive themselves as having a high level of cultural intelligence. The findings suggest that as the number of books participants read increases, their perception of cultural intelligence levels also rises.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA Test Results on Participants' Perceptions of Cultural Intelligence Levels Based on the Number of Books By Foreign Authors Read In One Year

Variable: Number of Books Read	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SS)	F	p	Significant Differences (Scheffe Test)
(1) No Books Read	54	3.55	0.390	2.290	0.000**	1-3; 2-3
(2) 1-10 Books Read	116	3.84	0.424			
(3) 11 or More Books Read	58	4.21	0.402			

Source of Difference (Scheffe Test), ** $p < 0.01$

Table 12 presents the descriptive findings and t-test results regarding participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on the family monthly income variable. The results indicate a significant difference based on family monthly income [$t(226) = 16.088$; $p < 0.01$]. According to the findings, participants' perception scores significantly vary according to their family income levels. Specifically, participants with a family monthly income between 17,000 and 40,000 TL have an average cultural intelligence perception score of ($M = 3.74$), while participants with a family income of 41,000 TL or more have an average perception score of ($M = 4.05$). The perception score of participants with a family income of 41,000 TL or more is higher than that of participants with a family income between 17,000 and 40,000 TL. Both groups, however, fall within the "often" category in their cultural intelligence perceptions. Furthermore, participants with a family income of 41,000 TL or more perceive themselves to possess higher levels of cultural intelligence and are more likely to engage in higher levels of metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational actions related to cultural intelligence than participants with a family income between 17,000 and 40,000 TL.

Table 12. Descriptive Findings and T-test Results Regarding Participants' Perceptions of Cultural Intelligence Levels Based on Family Monthly Income Variable

Variable: Family Monthly Income	N	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SS)	t	p
17,000-40,000 TL	159	3.74	0.429	16.088	0.000**
41,000 TL and above	69	4.05	0.486		

** $p < 0.01$

In Table 13, the descriptive findings and t-test results regarding the participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels according to the variable of GPA (Grade Point Average) are presented. According to these results, a significant difference was found based on the GPA (Grade Point Average) are variable [$t(226) = 11.917$; $p < 0.01$]. The mean perception scores of participants differ significantly according to their GPA (Grade Point Average). Based on the findings, participants with an GPA (Grade Point Average) of 3.00 and above have an average perception of cultural intelligence ($M = 3.91$), while participants with an GPA (Grade Point Average) average of 2.99 or below

have an average perception of cultural intelligence ($M = 3.69$). The mean perception score of participants with an GPA (Grade Point Average) of 3.00 and above is higher than that of participants with an GPA (Grade Point Average) of 2.99 or below. The mean perceptions of participants in both categories fall within the "often" range. Furthermore, it appears that participants with an GPA (Grade Point Average) of 3.00 and above perceive themselves as possessing a higher level of cultural intelligence compared to those with an GPA (Grade Point Average) of 2.99 or below, and they are perceived to engage more frequently in higher-order cognitive, behavioral, and motivational actions and behaviors related to cultural intelligence.

Table 13. Descriptive Findings and T-Test Results Regarding Participants' Perceptions of Cultural Intelligence Levels Based on the GPA (Grade Point Average) Variable

Variable: GPA (Grade Point Average)	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-value	p-value
Participants with an Academic Average of 2.99 and Below	97	3.69	0.494	11.917	0.000**
Participants with an GPA (Grade Point Average) of 3 and Above	131	3.91	0.413		

**p < 0.01

Table 14 presents the descriptive findings and ANOVA test results regarding participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on the mother's educational status variable. According to the results of one-way analysis of variance, a significant difference exists in participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on their mother's educational status ($F: 1.992$; $df: (2-225)$; $p < 0.01$). Participants whose mothers have a higher education degree have a mean perception score of ($M = 4.02$), those whose mothers have a high school degree have a mean of ($M = 3.87$), participants whose mothers have a middle school degree have a mean of ($M = 3.80$), and participants whose mothers have an elementary school degree have a mean of ($M = 3.63$). All these scores fall into the "mostly agree" category.

To identify the source of the difference in participants' perceptions, a Scheffe test was conducted. The results of the Scheffe test revealed that the differences in perceptions were primarily due to participants whose mothers had a higher education degree and those whose mothers had a high school education. Participants whose mothers have a higher education perceive themselves as having a higher level of cultural intelligence compared to others. On the other hand, participants whose mothers have an elementary school education perceive themselves as having a lower level of cultural intelligence compared to others. The findings suggest that as the education level of participants' mothers increases, their cultural intelligence levels also tend to increase.

Table 14. Descriptive Findings and ANOVA Test Results Regarding Participants' Perceptions of Their Cultural Intelligence Levels Based on the Mother's Educational Status Variable

Variable: Educational Level	Mother's	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	F	p	Significant (Scheffe Test)	Differences
(1) Primary School		86	3.63	0.378	1.992	0.000**		1-3; 1-4
(2) Secondary School		50	3.80	0.456				
(3) High School		55	3.87	0.466				
(4) Higher Education		37	4.01	0.603				

*Source of Difference: Scheffe Test, **p < 0.01

Table 15 presents the descriptive findings and the results of the ANOVA test regarding participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels according to their fathers' educational backgrounds. The results of the one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in participants' perceptions of their cultural intelligence levels based on their fathers' educational status ($F: 2.362$; $df: (2-225)$; $p < 0.01$). Participants whose fathers have a higher education background exhibited an average perception of cultural intelligence ($M=4.11$), those with fathers who completed high school had an average perception ($M=3.91$), and those with fathers who completed middle school had a perception falling under the "often" category ($M=3.54$). Participants whose fathers completed primary school showed a perception in the "sometimes" category with an average score of ($M=3.31$). To determine the source of the difference in perceptions, a Scheffe test was conducted. The results indicated that the significant difference originated between participants whose fathers had higher education and those whose fathers had completed high school. Participants whose fathers have higher education perceive themselves as possessing a higher level of cultural intelligence compared to other groups. On the other hand, participants whose fathers have only completed primary school perceive themselves as having a lower level of cultural intelligence. Participants whose fathers have completed higher education, high school, and middle school generally perceive themselves as having a high level of cultural intelligence, whereas those whose fathers completed primary school perceive themselves as possessing an average level. It can be concluded that as the educational level of participants' fathers increases, participants' perceived levels of cultural intelligence also rise.

Table 15. Descriptive Findings and ANOVA Test Results Regarding Participants' Perceptions of Cultural Intelligence Levels Based on Father's Educational Background

Variable: Father's Education Level	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	F	p	Significant Differences (Scheffe Test)
(1) Primary School	76	3.31	0.417	2.362	0.000**	1-3; 1-4; 2-3; 2-4
(2) Middle School	40	3.54	0.355			
(3) High School	71	3.91	0.407			
(4) Higher Education	41	4.11	0.564			

** $p < 0.01$, Source of the Difference: Scheffe Test

Results, Discussion, and Recommendations

This study aimed to examine the cultural intelligence (CQ) levels of students from the Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts at Mersin University, and to determine the relationship between these levels and various demographic factors. The findings revealed that gastronomy students generally possess high levels of cultural intelligence. However, it was observed that demographic factors had significant effects on these levels. In particular, travel history, age, gender, and parental education level emerged as key factors influencing students' cultural intelligence (Engle & Nehrt, 2012).

The study demonstrated that travel history exerts a strong influence on cultural intelligence. Students with travel experience exhibited significantly higher levels of cultural intelligence compared to those without such experience. This finding aligns with the literature, which highlights international travel as a crucial factor in enhancing cultural interaction and awareness (Lee, Weber & Rivera, 2019). Travel not only enables individuals to better understand different cultures but also helps them to develop empathetic communication skills, become familiar with culinary cultures, and strengthen their ability to adapt to diverse cultural norms.

Regarding the variable of age, findings indicated that younger students possessed higher levels of cultural intelligence. It is generally considered that younger individuals are more flexible, open-minded, and sensitive to cultural differences, traits that positively contribute to the development of cultural intelligence (Hüseyinoğlu, 2018). In terms of gender, female students were found to have higher cultural intelligence levels compared to their male counterparts. It has been suggested that this difference may stem from women's stronger empathetic skills and higher emotional intelligence (Baez & Koçak, 2021). Nevertheless, inconsistencies regarding the relationship between gender and cultural intelligence have been noted in the literature. While some studies have emphasized higher CQ levels among women (Bobanovic, Grzinic, & MacNaba, 2019), others have found no significant gender-based differences (Mahasneh et al., 2019; Ward & Fischer, 2008).

Parental education level was also found to significantly affect students' cultural intelligence. Students whose parents had attained higher levels of education demonstrated markedly higher cultural intelligence compared to those whose parents had lower educational backgrounds. This finding aligns with the existing literature suggesting that cultural intelligence is shaped not only by individual experiences but also by familial and socioeconomic factors (Bal, 2022).

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of travel history in the development of cultural intelligence. Engaging with diverse cultures through travel enhances individuals' cultural awareness and facilitates understanding of linguistic and cultural differences (Lee, Weber & Rivera, 2019). Travel experiences also contribute to the development of empathetic skills, familiarity with various culinary traditions, and the acquisition of a global perspective. Particularly in a field like gastronomy, where intercultural interaction is intense, travel can be seen as a vital element in promoting professional development. These results highlight the importance of offering alternative opportunities such as cultural exchange programmes and international internships to students who are unable to travel abroad.

Findings related to age suggest that younger individuals tend to be more open-minded and sensitive to cultural differences, indicating that flexibility and adaptability associated with youth may positively impact cultural intelligence (Hüseyinoğlu, 2018). However, findings related to gender reveal inconsistencies with the broader literature. While some studies support the conclusion that women exhibit higher levels of cultural intelligence (Baez & Koçak, 2021), others report no significant gender differences (Mahasneh et al., 2019). This inconsistency suggests that further research is needed to clarify the role of gender in cultural intelligence development.

The effect of parental education level appears more consistent and significant. This finding indicates that students' cultural intelligence is influenced not only by personal experiences but also by familial background (Bal, 2022).

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that cultural intelligence be positioned not merely as a skill but as a core component of gastronomy education programmes. In addition to enhancing students' technical skills, gastronomy curricula should be designed to support the development of cultural intelligence. In this context, courses, seminars, and activities aimed at cultivating cultural intelligence should be incorporated into educational programmes, providing students with opportunities for interaction with different cultures. Practical experiences such

as international culinary applications, cultural excursions, and participation in global gastronomy events would assist students in recognising cultural differences and developing effective intercultural interaction skills.

Given the strong impact of travel history on cultural intelligence, it is crucial to offer international experience opportunities to students. For those unable to travel abroad, initiatives such as cultural exchange programmes, international internships, and projects exposing them to various culinary cultures should be developed. Such experiences will enhance students' cultural awareness and enable them to integrate cultural elements into their gastronomic practices more effectively (Lee, Weber & Rivera, 2019). Furthermore, international exposure would broaden students' perspectives on world cuisines and contribute to their success in the global gastronomy sector.

Considering that cultural intelligence is a competency that can be developed, it is recommended that students' CQ levels be regularly assessed. These assessments would provide valuable data to measure the effectiveness of educational programmes and to formulate strategies tailored to students' developmental needs (Bal, 2022). This process would facilitate the monitoring of student progress and allow for the provision of targeted support when necessary. Regular evaluation would also enable instructors to focus on students' developmental trajectories and provide appropriate guidance.

In conclusion, this study strongly emphasises the necessity of integrating cultural intelligence into gastronomy education. Cultural intelligence not only enhances students' technical knowledge and skills but also fosters the ability to understand cultural diversity, engage in empathetic communication, and reflect cultural richness in their gastronomic practices. Incorporating strategies to cultivate cultural intelligence into educational curricula will enhance the quality of gastronomy education and significantly contribute to students' success in building careers in an increasingly globalised professional environment (Engle & Nehrt, 2012).

Declaration

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Mersin University with the decision dated 04.03.2025, taken during the 2nd meeting under decision number 58.

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Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission


T.C.
MERSİN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Sosyal Ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu

Tarih: 06/03/2025 16:06
 Sayı: E-32793531-050.04.3012845
 SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER ETİK
 KURULU

 3032845
 2025 AİLE YILI

Karar Tarihi	Toplantı Sayısı	Karar Sayısı
04.03.2025	2	58

Öğr. Gör. Dr. Cevat ERCİK'in **Kültürel Zekâ Bileşenlerinin Gastronomi Öğrencilerinde İncelenmesi:**
Mersin Üniversitesi Örneği adlı çalışması kurumumuz tarafından incelenmiş ve oy birliğiyle etik yönden uygun
 bulunmuştur.

Prof. Dr. Neriman
AÇIKALIN
 Kurul Başkanı

Prof. Dr. Habibe Tuğba
EROL KORKMAZ
 Kurul Üyesi

Prof. Dr. İlhan EGE
 Kurul Üyesi

Prof. Dr. Lütfi ÜREDİ
 Kurul Üyesi

Prof. Dr. Mustafa
ÖNCÜ
 Kurul Üyesi

Prof. Dr. Cengiz Mesut
TOSUN
 Kurul Üyesi

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