

Relationship between cultural intelligence and career and work adaptability in nursing students

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Abstract

Objective: To investigate the relationship between cultural intelligence and career and work adaptability among nursing students.

Method: The descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted at Kilis 7 Aralik University Nursing Department in Turkey from April to May 2019, and comprised nursing students of either gender. Data was gathered using Cultural Intelligence Scale and Career and Work Adaptability Questionnaire. Data was analysed using SPSS24.

Results: Of the 277 subjects, 162(58.5%) were females and 115(41.5%) were males. The overall mean age was 21.21±1.81 years. The mean Cultural Intelligence Scale score was 95.17±18.16. The mean Career and Work Adaptability Questionnaire score was 115.69±19.38. There was a positive correlation between the total scores and subscale scores of both the scales ($r=598, p<0.001$). The student's father's occupation, desire to work overseas, feeling like a good fit for nursing, and feeling prepared for professional life significantly affected cultural intelligence ($p<0.05$). The student's father's occupation significantly affected career and work adaptability ($p=0.001$).

Conclusions: There was a positive correlation between the total scores and subscale scores of Cultural Intelligence Scale and Career and Work Adaptability Questionnaire.

Keywords: Culture, Intelligence, Career, Work adaptability, Nursing student. (JPMA 74: 459; 2024)

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Introduction

People with high cultural intelligence are more successful in understanding others and their intentions in a better manner. Poor cultural intelligence leads to unnecessary conflict, delay and leadership errors.^{1,2} Individuals with cultural intelligence can easily adapt to a multicultural environment. They make appropriate decisions through more effective cultural evaluation and overcome the difficulties they encounter. Such individuals also have communication and coordination skills.^{1,3,4} Cultural intelligence affects people's ability to adapt to the transcultural environment as well as their work performance, decision-making, innovation behaviours, trust and organisational commitment.⁵ It can also be effective in the adaptation of nursing students who will provide care to patients from various cultures. Students need to acquire the professional values of the field from the initial years in their career plan, and cultural intelligence is a key component.⁵

A study highlighted that as individuals' cultural intelligence levels increased, both task organisational citizenship behaviours and performance increased.⁶ Multicultural

persons work with people from various cultures and can speak different languages and have greater empathy, and that enables them to better understand and serve people from different cultures.⁷ Students who are traditionally employed in their own culture and country often find their career plan quite confining.⁷ A study asserted that if university students have high levels of cultural intelligence, they are considered more talented in another cultural environment. It can be said that there is a positive relation between career adaptability and cultural intelligence.⁸ Among students at a private university, career adaptability was positively and significantly related to the intention to have a career overseas.⁹ Exposure to different cultures implies exposure to different countries with different career opportunities.⁸ Cultural intelligence is an important part of this effect.⁹ Cultural intelligence positively develops innovative thinking skills, which is the key to the future for all professions, and adds quality to the service provided.¹⁰ If students are given the opportunity to proactively choose a multicultural perspective, they will be more courageous after leaving university to have the experiences they need to increase their career adaptability.¹¹

The acquisition of cultural intelligence skills facilitates adaptation to life. It is important that nurses develop these skills in the healthcare sector, which is one of the leading occupations that require all types of human relations.⁷ When nurses have better communication skills and cultural intelligence levels, they provide more effective and higher

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quality of care. Tasks performed by nurses with cultural intelligence has more positive results, shows improved coping skills of the nurse, reduces dependencies and shortens patients' duration of hospitalisation.⁷

Literature search resulted in no studies assessing how cultural intelligence affects nursing students' adaptation to their work and professional life. Investigation of the relationship between cultural intelligence, along with adaptation to work and professional life among nursing students who must care for patients from a variety of different cultures and the factors affecting it, is necessary to provide information about nursing students' adaptation process for work and professional life.

The current study was planned to investigate the relationship between cultural intelligence combined with career and work adaptability, and the factors affecting it in nursing students.

Subjects and Methods

The descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted at Kilis 7 Aralık University Nursing Department in Turkey from April to May 2019. After approval from ethics review committee and permission from the faculty administration, the sample was raised using convenience sampling method from among student nurses of either gender who volunteered to take part. The target was to include all those currently studying at the Nursing Department. Those who did not volunteer to participate were excluded.

Sociodemographic data as well as cultural intelligence and professional life parameters were noted using questionnaires that were administered by the researchers. The survey took approximately 10 minutes of an individual's time to complete.

The sociodemographic and occupational characteristics were explored using a predesigned 21-item questionnaire prepared in the light of literature.^{6,7} Information regarding cultural intelligence, experience serving people from different cultures or encounters with other cultures, and knowledge of any foreign language were also explored.

The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) was developed by Ang et al. in 2007 to determine an individual's level of cultural intelligence.¹² The validity and reliability of a Turkish version of the scale was determined by İlhan and Çetin in 2014.¹³ There are 20 items on the scale that are answered using a 7-point Likert rating scale. The scale consists of four sub-dimensions: metacognition (Q. 1-4), cognition (Q. 5-10), motivation (Q. 11-15) and behaviour (Q. 16-20). The scale score ranges 20-140 points, with higher score indicating higher degree of cultural intelligence. Scores 20-54 correspond to low level, scores 55-104 indicate a moderate

level, and scores 105-140 correspond to a high level of cultural intelligence. Cronbach's alpha values for the whole scale was 0.85.¹³ For the current study, the CQS had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.91.

The Career and Work Adaptability Questionnaire (CWAQ) was developed by Nota et al. in 2012¹⁴ and validity for the Turkish population was determined by Kaya et al. in 2014.¹⁵ The scale is composed of 5 items and 5 sub-dimensions. The scale gives a total score according to the sub-dimensions. None of the items is reverse-scored, and higher scores are interpreted as indication of a higher level of compliance for all dimensions and the total scale score. The sub-dimensions of the scale are: trust in talent and care for the future (Trust) = items 1-8; Self-control = items 9-11; tendency to show trustworthy abilities and social responsibilities (Cooperation) = items 12-20; curiosity and a tendency to discover (Curiosity) = items 21-25; and time perception and individual liability (Concern) = items 26-31. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient for the scale was 0.93 overall. For the current study, the CWAQ's Cronbach's alpha value was 0.96.

Data was analysed using SPSS 24. Frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation values were used to express the data, as appropriate. Multiple regression analysis was used. Relationship between CQS subscales and CWAQ levels were evaluated through Pearson's correlation. The results were evaluated with a confidence interval (CI) of 95%, and statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Of the 291 students at the department, 277(95.2%) participated; 162(58.5%) females and 115(41.5%) males. The overall mean age was 21.21 ± 1.81 years. Descriptive data was noted in detail (Table 1).

The mean CQS score was 95.17 ± 18.16 , and the mean CWAQ score was 115.69 ± 19.38 (Table 2).

There was a positive correlation between the total scores and subscale scores of both the scales ($r=598$, $p < 0.001$) (Table 3).

According to regression analysis, father's occupation ($B=7.943$, $p=0.005$), desire to work overseas ($B=-4.936$, $p=0.026$), feeling like a good fit for nursing ($B=-6.403$, $p=0.016$), and feeling ready for business ($B=-3.394$, $p=0.029$) significantly affected cultural intelligence. Father's occupation ($B=10.112$, $p=0.001$) also significantly affected career and work adaptability in students.

Table-1: Demographic characteristics.

Characteristics of nursing students	n (%)
Mean Age (years) [min: 17 – max: 29]	21.21±1.81
Year of Education	
First	56 (20.2)
Second	54 (19.5)
Third	85 (30.7)
Fourth	82 (29.6)
Gender	
Female	162 (58.5)
Men	115 (41.5)
Place to stay	
With his/her family	52 (18.8)
With friends	52 (18.8)
Hostel	173 (62.5)
Mother Education	
Illiterate	48 (17.3)
Literate	33 (11.9)
Primary education	148 (53.4)
High school/University	48 (17.3)
Father Education	
Literate	34 (12.3)
Primary education	149 (53.8)
High school/University	94 (33.9)
Mother occupation	
Housewife	270 (92.5)
Working	7 (2.5)
Father occupation	
Retired	50 (18.1)
Worker/Officer	227 (81.9)
Family Income	
Minimum wage and under	102 (36.8)
Minimum wage upper	175 (63.2)
Family settlement	
Village/Town	51 (18.4)
District	48 (17.3)
Province	178 (64.3)
Number of sibling	
1 and 2	36 (13)
3	57 (20.6)
4	62 (22.4)
5 and above	122 (44)
Providing care to patients from different cultures	
Yes	167 (60.3)
No	110 (39.7)
Foreign Language	
English + Arabic/Kurdish	238 (85.9)
No	39 (14.1)
Before going overseas	
Yes	40 (14.4)
No	237 (85.6)
Wants to work overseas	
Yes	172 (62.1)
No	105 (37.9)
Feeling suitable for nursing	
Yes	214 (77.3)
No/Partially	63 (22.7)
Feeling ready for busines	
Yes	172 (62.1)
No	68 (24.5)
Partially	37 (13.4)
Total	277 (100)

Table-2: Overall and subscales scores of Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) and Career and Work Adaptability Questionnaire (n= 277).

Scale (Number of Questions)	Mean±SD	Min-Max
Cultural Intelligence Scale (20)	95.17±18.16	23-140
Subscale of Metacognition (4)	20.92±4.99	5-28
Subscale of Cognition (6)	24.98±6.68	6-42
Subscale of Motivation (5)	24.63±5.77	5-35
Subscale of Behaviour (5)	24.64±5.84	5-35
Career and Work Adaptability Questionnaire (31)	115.69±19.38	35-155
Subscale of Self-control (3)	29.67±5.63	8-40
Subscale of Cooperation (9)	10.29±2.33	3-15
Subscale of Curiosity (5)	35.13±6.61	9-45
Subscale of Concern (6)	18.53±3.77	5-25
	22.18±4.23	6-30

◀ Values's title

Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum; SD: Standard Deviation.

Discussion

The current study examined the relationship of cultural intelligence with career and work adaptability in university nursing students. It is important that nursing students who care for different cultures integrate their understanding of holistic care into their nursing practice. The nursing profession is deeply impacted by global illnesses as seen once again during the active phase of the coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) pandemic.^{16,17}

In recent studies, mean total cultural intelligence score among nurses^{16,17} was similar. Student's CWAQ score was above average in the current study, indicating that students willingly preferred the nursing profession.

In the current study, there was a positive relationship between cultural intelligence and career and work adaptability, and higher mean CQS score was correlated to higher mean CWAQ scores. A study found career adaptability to be significantly related to intention to work overseas, and cultural intelligence was an important part of such a finding.⁹ A study asserted that university students with upper levels of cultural intelligence were more likely to be sophisticated and talented in another cultural environment. Furthermore, positive relation between cultural intelligence and career adaptability were also reported.⁸ A 2021 study reported positive relations between cultural intelligence and nursing leadership.¹⁸ Majda et al. highlighted that multicultural people have greater empathy, which enables them to better understand and serve individual's from different cultures.⁷ Segev et al. demonstrated a negative relation between cultural intelligence and social distance, with the minority group showing higher cultural intelligence.¹⁹ Ma et. al. assessed male nursing students and their results showed that core self-evaluations and informal support were positively correlated with career adaptability, which was also positively associated with academic satisfaction.²⁰ Studies indicated that cultural intelligence, cross-cultural

Table-3: Relationship of cultural intelligence with career and work adaptability.

	Cultural Intelligence	Metacognition	Cognition	Motivation	Behaviour	Scale Total Score
Career and Work	<i>r</i> -value	0.520**	0.230**	0.585**	0.576**	0.598**
Adaptability Total Score	<i>p</i> -value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Trust	<i>r</i> -value	0.452**	0.250**	0.543**	0.540**	0.562**
	<i>p</i> -value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Self-control	<i>r</i> -value	0.317**	0.190**	0.412**	0.381**	0.410**
	<i>p</i> -value	<0.001	0.002	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Cooperation	<i>r</i> -value	0.478**	0.151*	0.524**	0.508**	0.517**
	<i>p</i> -value	<0.001	0.012	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Curiosity	<i>r</i> -value	0.483**	0.225**	0.500**	0.472**	0.526**
	<i>p</i> -value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Concern	<i>r</i> -value	0.427**	0.178**	0.464**	0.495**	0.489**
	<i>p</i> -value	<0.001	0.003	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

adaptability and job performance were affected by work experiences and language talent.³ A 2017 study found that cultural intelligence affected business performance, and cross-cultural adaptability depended on cultural intelligence and job productivity.²¹

The current findings are similar to those reported earlier,^{3,8} highlighting that nursing students with high cultural intelligence would be more able to adapt when providing nursing care in variable environments and to patients from different cultures and in different countries.^{3,8}

The current study showed that father's occupation affected career and work adaptability in nursing students. These differences may stem from the sociocultural environment in which students live. It may also be about career planning facilities in major cities compared to smaller cities. Cultural intelligence work adaptability levels of students whose fathers were retired were high. Retired fathers were likely to be older, suggesting that children with older fathers had higher cultural intelligence.²²⁻²⁴ Each of the four cultural intelligence components have been linked to various intercultural effectiveness outcomes by different studies.^{23,24}

The current study observed positive and significant relationships among metacognition, cognition, motivation, behaviour and self-control, cooperation, curiosity and concern subscales of the two scales. Developing and sustaining individual skills has been reported to have a positive effect on young people's professional careers.²⁵

Philips et. al. in 2017 studied the culture, health and happiness expectation experiences of nursing students before and after going abroad. The results showed that four themes were most important: cultural perception, relationship with society, health and felicity, and adaptability and novelty.²⁵ In addition, experiences abroad

for students increased the value of these themes. In another study, speaking a language other than the student's first language was one of the most important factors in serving different cultures.⁷ According to the findings of one study, most students at the university speak a language other than their first language.⁷

In the current study, students who wanted to work abroad, who felt like they were suited to nursing, and those who were ready for a professional life had a higher total CQS score. These findings are in agreement with other studies,²²⁻²⁵ which is an indicator that individuals who speak different languages can adapt more easily to international contexts. Thus, the role of cultural intelligence in cognitive and behavioural preparedness for the nursing profession cannot be ignored in nursing students who have good relations and communication.²²⁻²⁵

In terms of limitations, the current study had a small sample size and data was collected from a single institution, which affects generalisability of the findings.

Other variables that may affect a student's cultural intelligence and career adaptability, like academic characteristics, previous education on cultural diversity, learning environment etc., should also be studied in the future.

Conclusions

Nursing students with higher cultural intelligence can adapt to the professional life more easily. Students whose fathers were retired had higher CQS and CWAQ score. Students who wanted to work abroad, who felt like they were suited for nursing and who were ready for a professional life, had a higher total CQS score. Cultural intelligence was one factor that should be taken into account in career planning for nursing student.

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SS: Data analysis, supervision, writing, critical revision.

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