The Degree of Intercultural Sensitivity and Effectiveness among Students of the College of Education in Kuwait

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Abstract: The study aimed to identify the degree of intercultural sensitivity (IS) and intercultural effectiveness (IE) among students of the College of Education in Kuwait. The study sample consisted of 370 randomly selected students. A questionnaire consisting mainly of (IS) scale and (IE) scale was used to collect the data. Each of the scales comprises of five components. The results showed high scores of students' responses in both the (IS) and (IE) components, which shows high levels of (IS) and (IE) towards those who are culturally different from them. The results also showed female superiority in some areas of the (IS) scale while men excelled in the relaxation interaction factor of the (IE) scale. It is hoped that these results will increase the awareness of the importance of intercultural education and help to develop a better understanding of ways to measure and to enhance and develop these important skills and attitudes in the Kuwaiti and other contexts.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Effectiveness, Cultural Awareness, Kuwait University

درجة الحساسية والفاعلية بين الثقافات لدى طلبة كلية التربية في جامعة الكويت

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الملخص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على درجة كل من الحساسية والفاعلية بين الثقافات لدى طلبة جامعة الكويت. تكونت العينة من 370 طالبا تم اختيارهم بالطريقة العشوائية. تم استخدام استبيان يتكون بشكل أساسي من مقياس الحساسية بين الثقافات ومقياس الفاعلية بين الثقافات، ويحتوي كل منهما على خمس مكونات. وقد أظهرت النتائج درجة عالية في استجابات الطلبة في كلا المقياسين مما يدل على مستويات عالية من الحساسية والفاعلية تجاه أولئك الذين يختلفون عنهم ثقافيا. كما أظهرت النتائج تفوق الاناث في بعض النواحي في مقياس الحساسية بين الثقافات، بينما تفوق الذكور في معامل تفاعل الاسترخاء لمقياس الفاعلية بين الثقافات. ومن المؤمل أن تؤدي هذه النتائج إلى زيادة الوعي بأهمية التعليم بين الثقافات، والمساعدة على تطوير فهم أفضل لطرق قياس وتعزيز وتحسين هذه المهارات والاتجاهات في السياق الكويتي وغيره.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التواصل بين الثقافات، الحساسية بين الثقافات، الفاعلية بين الثقافات، الوعي الثقافي، جامعة الكويت

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Introduction

The Kuwaiti society is characterized by its significant international diversity given the small number of its citizens and the presence of a majority of residents from other countries living and working in Kuwait. Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (2020) estimates the country's total population to be 5 million, with non-Kuwaitis accounting for nearly 70% of the population. According to the World Population Review (2020), estimates from 2013 break down the ethnic groups are as follows: Kuwaiti (31.3%), other Arabs (27.9%), South Asians (37.8%), Africans (1.9%), and others (o.9%), (including Europeans, North Americans, South Americans, and Australians).

This diversity in nationalities is accompanied by differences in culture including language, dialect, customs, traditions, religions, and ways of thinking. The mix of Kuwaitis with large numbers of non-Kuwaitis creates significant interaction opportunities and results in attitude development reflected in the feelings, sentiments and behaviors of both groups. Thus, this is important for Kuwaitis to enhance their intercultural awareness and cultural competencies that equip them to communicate and interact with others from diverse cultures. Doing so requires advanced levels of sensitivity and effectiveness. Currently, there is an urgent demand for adult education to trigger both individual and collective processes of learning to live together in multicultural cities and societies due to the presence of very diverse life worlds and lifestyles (Roets et al., 2012). Cultural awareness and effectiveness are critical attributes in successful professional education, retention and lifelong learning (Todd, 1994). Bagnall (2006) argued that failing to bring these intercultural obstacles to consciousness restricts both teachers and learners' ability to fully participate in lifelong learning.

This decade has witnessed massive violent events and conflicts in many Arab countries in which religious, ethnic and political conflicts interfered, and a large number of people were killed and displaced, making studying the issue of cultural diversity a matter of critical importance.

The concepts of intercultural sensitivity (IS) and intercultural effectiveness (IE) have comprised a large component of research in many cultures (Demir & Kiran, 2016; Moore-Jones, 2018; Arcagok & Yilmaz, 2020), but few studies address these skills in the unique context of Kuwaiti society. One exception is Turner's (1991) study that assessed the IS of American expatriates in Kuwait thirty years ago. This study revealed, by their length of stay in Kuwait, that the Americans were reasonably satisfied with their performance and ability to adapt to life in Kuwait. Those who scored higher on ethno-relative scales described having a much more positive experience. Those who were less satisfied with life in Kuwait still found the experience rewarding. Thus, the issues of both IS and IT need to be studied and addressed in current times and beyond a sample of expatriates.

Looking at this issue from the perspectives of student teachers at the College of Education can add value since teachers influence their students' perceptions and play a crucial role as educators of competent individuals in any diverse society (Segura-Robles & Parra-Gonzalez, 2019). Applications of cultural diversity is a major source of information and attitude development (Forrest et al., 2017). Therefore, this study identifies the extent to which students of the College of Education in Kuwait have acquired high levels of cultural competencies including cultural effectiveness and effective cultural sensitivity. Awareness of these levels will fill a gap in knowledge about the cultural competencies in this part of the world and will serve to guide policies and practices that enhance and improve both pre-service and professional development in education.

2. Aim and Research Questions

This study aimed to identify the degree of IS and IE competences of the students in the College of Education at Kuwait University though answering the following questions:
1. What is the degree of IS among students of the College of Education in Kuwait?
2. Are there significant differences between the degree of IS among students according to gender variable?
3. What is the degree of IE among students of the College of Education in Kuwait?
4. 4. Are there significant differences between the degree of IE among students according to gender variable?

3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Intercultural education refers to work in assessing and improving interaction among diverse groups of people with different religions, cultures, languages and attitudes that affect their opinions and views (Chiriac & Panciuc, 2015). Literature multicultural education research indicates that the teacher is an important influence on intercultural sensitivity as demonstrated by his/her reaction to cultural differences and diversity in the classroom (Aydin, 2013). In addition, studies show the importance of having

education faculty members and practicing professional teachers as role models (Bettinger & Long, 2005).

In multicultural and intercultural education, cultural diversity refers not only to ethnicity and race but also, among other things, gender, class, language, sexual orientation, and religion, which means that in practice, almost all classrooms are culturally diverse (Holm & Zilliacus, 2009). Therefore, the intercultural communication skills are an important component and an integral part of cultural competency.

Chen and Starosta's (1996) model of intercultural communication competence (ICC) provides a holistic view of the different dimensions of this concept. The model is composed of three conceptual dimensions of ICC: intercultural awareness (IA), intercultural sensitivity (IS), and intercultural effectiveness (IE), all of which contribute to the ability to effectively communicate among different individuals and groups within culturally diverse environments (Portalla & Chen, 2010).

Intercultural competence, as defined by Wang and Ching (2015, p. 16), is the "ability to recognize, respect, value, and use productively cultural conditions and orientation patterns with respect to the interpreting and shaping the world". Similarly, Bennett and Bennett (2004) noted that intercultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. Based on this conceptual model, Chen and Starosta (2000) further explicated the nature and components of IS and developed an instrument to measure the concept.

3.1 Intercultural Sensitivity.

The terms IS, ICC, cross-cultural adaptation, and transcultural communication have been used interchangeably in the literature on intercultural studies (Sinicrope et al., 2007). Chen and Starosta (2000) defined IS as one's active desire to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures. High levels of IS usually results in improved communication among people from different cultural backgrounds (Chen, 2010). At the same time, the skills and attitudes involved in IS require training and practice to be used effectively (Teyssier et al., 2016).

Bennett (1993) defined six stages of IS as follows: denial, defense, minimalization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The first three stages are ethnocentric; they refer to issues associated with experiencing one's own culture as more "central to reali-

ty" than those from different cultures. The last three stages are ethno-relative; they refer to issues associated with experiencing different cultures as alternative ways of organizing reality (Bennett, 2017). Perry and Southwell (2011, p. 454) stated that "each stage is moving deeper to a level of intercultural sensitivity," and "as each person's experience or understanding of cultural difference becomes more complex, his/her potential for intercultural competence increases."

According to Sarwari and Wahab (2017), IS and ICC are the main factors that help individuals engage in effective intercultural communication with people from different cultures. Sakharova et al. (2017) found that the higher the level of IS is, the more actively students participate in different international activities held by the university such as festivals, conferences, training sessions, exhibitions, and fairs. At the same time, the more intense these interpersonal contacts are, the higher the level of IS becomes. Chen's (2010) study showed that people with a higher degree of IS were less ethnocentric and apprehensive in intercultural interaction. The results reinforced the importance of IS as a necessary element in competent intercultural communication.

Many studies indicate that teachers and pre-service teachers need to demonstrate high levels of cultural sensitivity in dealing with their students or colleagues (Arcagok & Yılmaz, 2020; Drandić, 2016; Ruiz-Bernardo et al., 2014; Segura-Robles & Parra-González, 2019). These findings differed in terms of the factors affecting IS. Some of them did not show significant gender differences in the sub-dimensions of the IS scale (Arcagok & Yılmaz, 2020; Demir & Kiran, 2016; Drandić, 2016; Tunnel & Aricioglu, 2018). Other studies found that gender seems to be an important variable because women generally have significantly greater IS than men (Banos, 2006).

3.2 Intercultural Effectiveness.

IE can be seen as the ability to interact and collaborate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and work with them successfully to enhance beneficial outcomes (Simkhovych, 2009; Vulpe et al., 2001). IE consists largely of communication skills, including both verbal and nonverbal behaviors that enable individuals to attain their communication goals in intercultural interaction through appropriate and effective performance (Portalla & Chen, 2010). Chen and Starosta (1996) argued that IE should only

refer to "intercultural adroitness" or the behavioral aspect of ICC.

The spread of IE skills in the community can reduce discrimination against oppressed groups, work toward equal opportunity and social justice for all groups and instigate an equitable distribution of power among members of different cultural groups (Hopkins-Gillispie, 2011). Furthermore, enhancing IE through the development of intercultural skills and competencies substantially contributes to establishing a more peaceful and tolerant society, which explains the considerable research interest in the field (Bećirović et al., 2019). Portalla and Chen (2010) identified various components to account for interculturally effective behaviors, organized into five categories: message skills, interaction management, behavioral flexibility, identity management, and relationship cultivation.

IE, as defined by Chen and Starosta (2000), is the behavioral dimension of ICC. The provision of intercultural care includes cultural sensitivity (emotional dimension), cultural awareness (cognitive dimension), and cultural skill (behavioral dimension) (Wiseman, 2003). Many studies have attempted to explore the links among these ICC dimensions (Sarwari & Wahab, 2017).

Hui (2017) found a positive correlation among the dimensions of ICC, especially between IS and IE. He found that students who can appropriately self-monitor their actions can demonstrate emotional self-control and learn what is acceptable in a given situation. Other studies confirmed positive correlations among factors and dimensions of the IE scale and four of the 'Big Five' Personality Traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness) (Wang & Ching, 2015). Gender-variable results have shown that female students are more culturally empathic than men, while men are generally more emotionally stable (Gonzales, 2017).

4. Research design and Methodology

4.1 Participants and Setting.

The study participants included 370 randomly selected students from a population of 7,000 students in the College of Education at Kuwait University during the second semester of 2018-2019 Academic year. The majority of the participants were females (75.7), whereas approximately a quarter of them were males (24.3%). Most students were in their first year (40%) and 34% in their second year. The majority of the students were Kuwaiti and were studying towards middle and high school (62.7%),

the rest were from primary school (34.3%). The sample corresponds to the student community, as the majority of students from the College of Education are female and in the secondary school specialization. All of the participants administrated the questionnaire during classes and their participation was voluntarily. The researchers entered the classes and read the questionnaire to the participants loudly to ensure understanding of the items.

4.2 Questionnaire.

A descriptive survey method was employed in this study. A questionnaire consisting of three parts was used. The first part gathered demographic information about the students (gender, academic year, and university specialization). The second part measured IE and is taken from Portalla and Chen's (2010) scale. It consists of 17 items distributed across five components: behavioral flexibility, interaction relaxation, interactant respect, identity maintenance, and interaction management. Since Portella and Chen's scale contains 20 items, the message component items were removed because it does not apply to the local context according to faculty members of College of Education, who reviewed and commented on the questionnaire. The third part is a measure of IS and was taken from Chen and Starosta (2000) twenty-four-item IS scale. The respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on a five-point Likert-like scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") regarding respect and awareness of cultural difference as well as interaction engagement, confidence, attentiveness, and enjoyment. In the scale, the items 2, 4, 7, 11, 13, 19, 21, 24, 26, 29, 32, 35, 36, 37 and 39 were scored by reverse coding. Likert type score means were valued as (Very high= 4.5-5, High= 3.5-4.49, Medium= 2.5-3.49, Low= 1.5-2.49 & Very Low =less than 1.49).

The questionnaire was translated by both researchers into Arabic using a translation program and verified by other native speakers to ensure that the Arabic version was understandable and consistent with the original one.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the Spearman Brown coefficient were used to measure reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the IS scale items yielded a value of 0.841, with scores of 0.792 and 0.886 for the IE scale items and for the total survey items, respectively (See Table 1). Face and conceptual validity were addressed by the use of instrument and scales that have been used by many researchers. For example, Chen and Starosta

(2000)'s original scale was validated through factor analysis and high correlations with previous research instruments in this area. The Chen and Starosta article has been cited by other researchers 995 times (Wu, 2015). To ensure the validity of the instrument, Linear Pearson correlation between the dimensions of the research and the total was conducted. It showed a positive and strong correlation, with values of .878 for the IS and .890 for the IE, all of which are statistically significant.

Table 1. Reliability of the IS & IE scales

Scale	Cronbach alpha	Split-half coefficient
Intercultural Sensitivity (IS)	0.841	0.524
Intercultural effectiveness (IE)	0.792	0.635
Total	0.886	0.729

5. Results and Discussion

1. What is the degree of IS among students of the College of Education in Kuwait?

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviations of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Factors

Factors	Mean	SD	Degree	Ranking
1. Interaction Engagement	3.88	0.514	High	2
2. Respect for Cultural Differences	3.77	0.649	High	4
3. Interaction Confidence	3.92	0.589	High	1
4. Interaction Enjoyment	3.80	0.923	High	3
5. Interaction Attentiveness	3.77	0.570	High	4
Total Average	**3.83**	**0.458**	**High**	

The IS scale included five factors and components as presented in Table 2. The average student responses was high in all these axes, which shows relatively high levels of IS toward those who are culturally different from them.

Table 3. Frequencies, Percentages, and Means of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Factors

Items		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree	Average	Degree
Factor1: Interaction Engagement								
1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	13	20	43	159	145	4.14	High
	%	0.8%	5.4%	11.6%	34.0%	39.2%		
2. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally distinct counterparts.	No.	6	21	46	182	115	4.02	High
	%	1.6%	5.7%	12.4%	49.2%	31.1%		
3. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.	No.	6	30	67	163	104	3.89	High
	%	1.6%	8.1%	18.1%	44.1%	28.1%		
4. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.	No.	3	17	52	187	111	4.04	High
	%	0.8%	4.6%	14.1%	50.5%	30.0%		
5. I avoid situations where I have to deal with culturally distinct persons.	No.	54	115	89	80	32	3.21*	Medium
	%	14.6%	31.1%	24.1%	21.6%	8.6%		
6. I often show my culturally distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.	No.	8	175	74	175	87	3.83	High
	%	2.2%	7.0%	20.0%	47.3%	23.5%		
7. I feel enjoyment toward differences between my culturally distinct counterpart and me.	No.	5	25	56	163	121	4.00	High
	%	1.4%	6.8%	15.1%	44.1%	32.7%		
Average Axis							**3.88**	**High**
Factor2: Respect for Cultural Differences								

8. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	No.	72	163	89	52	21	3.50*	High
	%	19.5%	36.8%	24.1%	14.1%	5.7%		
9. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	No.	108	135	60	45	22	3.71*	High
	%	29.2%	36.5%	16.2%	12.2%	5.9%		
10. I respect the values of people from different cultures.	No.	4	5	25	106	230	4.49	High
	%	1.1%	1.4%	6.8%	28.6%	62.2%		
11. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.	No.	2	6	33	143	186	4.36	High
	%	0.5%	1.6%	8.9%	36.8%	50.3%		
12. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	No.	151	130	47	26	16	4.01*	High
	%	40.8%	35.1%	12.7%	7.0%	4.3%		
13. I think my culture is better than other cultures.	No.	39	55	68	116	92	2.55*	Medium
	%	10.5%	14.9%	18.4%	31.4%	24.9%		
Average Axis							**3.77**	**High**
Factor3: Interaction Confidence								
14. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	2	14	42	165	147	4.19	High
	%	0.5%	3.8%	11.4%	44.6%	39.7%		
15. I find it very hard to talk to people from different cultures.	No.	53	125	99	65	28	3.30*	Medium
	%	14.3%	33.8%	26.8%	17.6%	7.6%		
16. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	4	5	25	106	85	3.87	High
	%	1.1%	6.5%	20.0%	49.5%	23.0%		
17. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	2	19	50	165	134	4.11	High
	%	0.5%	5.1%	13.5%	44.6%	36.2%		
18. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	5	12	52	161	140	4.13	High
	%	1.4%	3.2%	14.1%	43.5%	37.8%		
Average Axis							**3.92**	**High**
Factor4: Interaction Enjoyment								
19. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	95	163	57	36	19	3.75*	High
	%	25.7%	44.1%	15.4%	9.7%	5.1%		
20. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	No.	104	149	52	45	20	3.74*	High
	%	28.1%	40.3%	14.1%	12.2%	5.4%		
21. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	143	126	46	37	38	3.92*	High
	%	38.6%	34.1%	12.4%	10.0%	4.9%		
Average Axis							**3.80**	**High**
Factor5: Interaction Attentiveness								
22. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	4	11	47	177	131	4.13	High
	%	1.1%	3.0%	12.7%	47.8%	35.4%		
23. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	5	7	30	158	170	4.30	High
	%	1.4%	1.9%	8.1%	42.7%	45.9%		
24. I am sensitive to my culturally distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.	No.	33	84	103	109	41	2.89*	Medium
	%	8.9%	22.7%	27.8%	29.5%	11.1%		
Average Axis							**3.77**	**High**

* Negative phrase, and the scores were reversed when computing the average.

Interaction engagement

The students' answers showed that they enjoyed interactions with people from different cultures and were opened to interacting with them, with a sense of enjoyment toward their differences.

Respect for cultural differences

The students' answers showed significant respect for the values of those who are culturally different from them as well as for the manner in which they behave. The majority of the students reported acceptance of the opinions of people from different cultures, and more than half of the sample thought that their culture is better than other cultures.

Interaction confidence

In general, the items in this component showed that students generally have self-confidence when interacting with people who are culturally different from them, although about a quarter of the respondents have difficulty in speaking with such people.

Interaction enjoyment

The majority of the respondents expressed uneasiness or a feeling of frustration when interacting with people of different cultures, but their answers also indicated their appreciation of the benefits that result from such interaction.

Interaction attentiveness

The vast majority of the students showed attention and focus when interacting with people of different cultures and their eagerness to obtain as much information as possible from this interaction. The results in Table 3 showed a high-level degree of IS among the students of the College of Education. In all factors and components of this scale, the students—who are, in the majority, Kuwaiti as mentioned earlier—feel confident in and enjoy interacting with culturally different people as well as show respect and interest in them. The interaction confidence factor has the highest mean average score with that of cultural sensitivity, and this high rate may be due to the students' frequent contact with others who are culturally different from them. The multiplicity of nationalities and different cultures in Kuwaiti society that the students interact with daily—whether at home, at the university, or at the markets—shows that these students have scored relatively high on all items in the scale, and they are confident toward those who are culturally different from them. This constant mingling gives the students the opportunity and hopefully the desire to understand, appreciate, and accept those who are different from them. These attitudes are gained by

contact, which is consistent with Teyssier et al. (2016) who claimed that the "relationship with cultural heterogeneity has an influence on the development of intercultural sensitivity" (p. 165).

The interaction engagement factor is ranked second. However, the results showed that a quarter of the students still find it very difficult to speak with people from different cultures and that about a third of them try to avoid situations in which they will have to deal with such people. This shows that IS in the students through confidence, respect, enjoyment, and interest are available, trying to convert these feelings into actions, such as communicating with others, may prove difficult. Feelings are one thing, and turning them into positive actions is another thing, which requires training and skill. This applies also to the results that show signs of insensitivity in which more than half of the sample thought that their culture is better than other cultures. This challenge was also found in subjects of Jain's (2013) study with American students.

2. Are there significant differences between the degree of IS among students according to gender variable?

As presented in Table 4, the T-test results for the two independent samples based on gender showed statistically significant differences between males and females on the following factors: respect for cultural differences, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness in favor of females.

Our results showed that the female students are more sensitive than the male students in terms of respecting different cultures as well as exhibiting enjoyment and interest when interacting with them. This is consistent with Gonzales (2017) study which also found that female students are more culturally empathic, and this may be due to increased capacity of women to empathize with others.

3. What is the degree of IE among students of the College of Education in Kuwait?

As shown in Table 5, the averages of the factors and components making up the IE scale were high, reaching 3.66, and the factor of interactant respect when dealing with different cultures scored highest with an average of 4.25, followed by interaction relaxation with an average of 3.97, interaction management with an average of 3.75, and identity maintenance with an average of 2.80.

Table 4. T-Test for Two Independent Samples between Genders in Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Factors

Factor	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T-Test	DF	P-Value
1. Interaction Engagement	M	90	3.84	0.585	0.704	131.5	0.442
	F	280	3.89	0.490			
2. Respect for Cultural Differences	M	90	3.56	0.762	**3.162	125.6	0.002
	F	280	3.84	0.594			
3. Interaction Confidence	M	90	3.92	0.632	0.092	368	0.927
	F	280	3.92	0.577			
4. Interaction Enjoyment	M	90	3.49	1.185	**3.130	116.0	0.002
	F	280	3.90	0.797			
5. Interaction Attentiveness	M	90	3.67	0.642	*2.067	368	0.039
	F	280	3.81	0.542			

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation of Intercultural Effectiveness Scale Factors

No	Factors	Mean	SD	Degree	Ranking
1	Behavioral Flexibility	3.53	0.765	High	4
2	Interaction Relaxation	3.97	0.535	High	2
3	Interactant Respect	4.25	0.567	High	1
4	Identity Maintenance	2.80	0.890	Medium	5
5	Interaction Management	3.75	0.676	High	3
	Total	**3.66**	**0.459**	**High**	

Table 6. Frequencies, Percentages, and Means of Intercultural Effectiveness Scale Factors

Items		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree	Average	Degree
Factor1: Behavioral Flexibility								
1. I am afraid to express myself when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	48	141	78	86	17	3.32*	Medium
	%	13.0%	38.1%	21.1%	23.2%	4.6%		
2. I am not always the person I appear to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	63	116	79	82	30	3.27*	Medium
	%	17.0%	31.4%	21.4%	22.2%	8.1%		
3. I often act like a very different person when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	63	122	62	89	34	3.25*	Medium
	%	17.0%	33.0%	16.8%	24.1%	9.2%		
4. I find the best way to act is to be myself when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	1	13	40	141	175	4.29	High
	%	0.3%	3.5%	10.8%	38.1%	47.3%		
Average Axis							**3.53**	**High**
Factor2: Interaction Relaxation								
5. I find it easy to talk with people from different cultures.	No.	4	22	62	193	89	3.92	High
	%	1.1%	5.9%	16.8%	52.2%	24.1%		
6. I find it easy to get along with people from different cultures.	No.	5	35	87	177	66	3.71	High
	%	1.4%	9.5%	23.5%	47.8%	18.8%		
7. I always know how to initiate a conversa-	No.	5	38	101	150	76	3.69	High

tion when interacting with people from different cultures.	%	1.4%	10.5%	27.3%	40.5%	20.5%	
8. I feel relaxed when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	9	50	121	148	42	3.44	Medium
	%	2.4%	13.5%	32.8%	40.0%	11.4%		
9. I find it easy to identify with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	No.	4	22	58	186	100	3.96	High
	%	1.1%	5.9%	15.7%	50.3%	27.0%		
Average Axis							3.97	High

Factor3: Interactant Respect

10. I use appropriate eye contact when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	9	40	59	172	90	3.79	High
	%	2.4%	10.8%	15.9%	46.5%	24.3%		
11. I always show respect for my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	No.	4	3	18	136	209	4.48	High
	%	1.1%	0.8%	4.9%	36.8%	56.5%		
12. I always show respect for the opinions of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	No.	1	5	19	128	217	4.50	Very high
	%	0.3%	1.4%	5.1%	34.6%	58.6%		
Average Axis							4.25	High

Factor4: Identity Maintenance

13. I find it difficult to feel that my culturally different counterparts are similar to me.	No.	24	80	105	111	50	2.78*	Medium
	%	6.5%	21.4%	28.4%	30%	13.5%		
14. I always feel a sense of distance with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	No.	32	81	75	151	31	2.82*	Medium
	%	8.6%	21.9%	30.3%	40.8%	8.4%		
Average Axis							2.80	Medium

Factor5: Interaction Management

15. I am able to express my ideas clearly when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	8	34	75	171	82	3.77	High
	%	2.2%	9.2%	20.3%	46.2%	22.2%		
16. I am able to answer questions effectively when interacting with people from different cultures.	No.	4	26	67	180	93	3.90	High
	%	1.1%	7.0%	18.1%	48.6%	25.1%		
17. I find that I have a lot in common with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.	No.	5	43	102	172	48	3.58	High
	%	1.4%	11.6%	27.6%	46.5%	13.0%		
Average Axis							3.75	High

* Negative phrase, and the scores were reversed when computing the average

Behavioral flexibility

The average responses of the students on behavioral flexibility came mostly with an average degree except for the item "I find the best way to act is to be myself when interacting with people from differ-

ent cultures," which earned a very high score. About a third of the respondents faced a problem with flexibility behavior while interacting culturally with people from different cultures. They could not act

naturally when interacting with these people, as they are afraid to express themselves.

Interaction relaxation

The items of this factor were high, which indicated that students from the College of Education generally interact with those who are culturally different from them in a calm, relaxed, and smooth manner.

Interactant respect

This factor obtained the highest average scores, and the students' answers showed high levels of respect for their culturally different counterparts and for their opinions during the interaction.

Identity maintenance

Nearly half of the respondents did not feel that their culturally different peers resembled them, and a similar proportion showed distance between them and their culturally different colleagues.

Interaction management

The students' responses to this factor demonstrated a high ability for them to manage interactions with their culturally different counterparts while communicating with them. The results showed that the average mean score of students' answers to the IE scale factors was high. The results of the study also showed high levels on those components of IE scale except for the identity maintenance factor. This factor showed that 45% to 50% of the respondents feel a sense of distance from their culturally different counterparts during interaction as well as difficulty in feeling that such counterparts are similar to them. This opinion may be due to the lack of programs in either the secondary or the university level to train students to accept their differences with others and turn this into added value rather than turning to caution when interactions occur.

Behavioral flexibility had a moderate score, where about a third of the sample members are afraid to express themselves and cannot act naturally when interacting with those who are culturally different from them. This may be because behavioral flexibility is a skill that requires training through enhancing ICC through student engagement learning (Yang, 2015). This is not the case in the Kuwaiti educational environment today, where most teachers tend not to talk about religious, sectarian, and regional differences out of concern that such discussion may lead to an increase in conflict in society.

4. Are there significant differences between the degrees of IE among students according to gender variable?

The T-test results presented in Table 7, showed statistically significant differences between males and females in the factor of relaxation interaction for the benefit of the males. Gender difference in the IE scale was statistically significant and relaxation interaction factor with males having higher scores. This is inconsistent with Bećirović et al. (2019) study that found a significant effect on the interactant respect and message skills subscales, and in both cases, the female participants demonstrated a higher level of IE than the males. This may be due to the nature of women in Kuwaiti society to be shy and often reluctant to initiate interaction with strangers and others who are culturally different from them.

Finally, the high student responses to the IS and IE scales in this study corresponded to Hui's (2017) study in China in a Micro-interaction contexts in which classes attended by both Chinese and American students, extracurricular activities which Chinese and American students co-working and in lectures given by American professors and classes which Chinese and Americans professors co-teach in.

Table 7. T-Test for Two Independent Samples between Genders in Intercultural Effectiveness Scale Factors

Factor	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T-Test	DF	P-Value
1. Behavioral Flexibility	M	90	3.44	0.856	1.297	368	0.195
	F	280	3.56	0.732			
2. Interaction Relaxation	M	90	4.09	0.529	2.448	368	0.015
	F	280	3.93	0.532			
3. Interactant Respect	M	90	4.23	0.595	0.540	368	0.589
	F	280	4.26	0.559			
4. Identity Maintenance	M	90	2.89	1.030	1.027	129.3	0.306
	F	280	2.77	0.840			
5. Interaction Management	M	90	3.86	0.661	1.775	368	0.077
	F	280	3.71	0.678			

6. Conclusion

Kirby et al. (2010) mentioned that learning should not only be lifelong, but also life wide, in the sense that it should be seen to take place in a wide range of social contexts including formal, non-formal and informal education. Support for lifelong learning, especially in contexts in which multiple cultures interact, can be challenging. Only through high levels of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness can educators assess their own cultural biases and serve as effective teachers.

IS and IE are major components of ICC and play an important role in facilitating human awareness of human differences and resulting capability to interact with mutual benefit. The ability to acquire IS and IE skills can contribute to promoting respect and appreciation for diversity among people regardless of intercultural differences. This study aimed to identify the degree of IS and IE competence of the students in the College of Education at Kuwait University. The results of the study showed that the students were skilled on both scales, with a high level in the students' answers average mean in both the IS and IE components. Meanwhile, the results showed female superiority in some areas of the IS scale, while the men excelled in the relaxation interaction factor in the IE scale. This suggests that the high average in IS may lead to their high IE.

Further study is needed to identify the extent of the correlation between the competencies of both scales in the local environment. There is also a need to diversify research methodologies and expand the research to qualitative data from interviews, case studies, observations, and document analyses to more completely identify and understand the extent of these competencies in the school environment. The sensitivity of the issue stems from the pressure that local and regional realities pose to the pattern and manner of interaction among individuals and the mechanisms for dealing with their differences. Locally, a majority of noncitizens live in Kuwait, and regionally, major conflicts and tensions have taken place in some neighborhoods based on ethnic, religious, class, and other backgrounds. These disturbances and ongoing tension pose a challenge to the educational system. Together, we need to learn how to fortify young people and students against intolerance and racism and make formal education the first line of defense for the principles of freedom, dignity, and appreciation for diversity. This first use of the IS and IE scales in the local Kuwaiti context can serve as a benchmark from 2019 to other researchers who want to look at it in the near future. Finally, the translation of these scales into Arabic, provides an opportunity for the instruments use and better cultural awareness and appreciation of diversity in other Arabic speaking countries.

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