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HIGHER EDUCATION

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# INVESTIGATING TOURISM STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY LEVELS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study was to determine the intercultural sensitivity level of associate degree students studying Cooking and Tourism and Hotel Management in a state university in Turkey. The study also investigated the students' intercultural sensitivity level according to some variables such as gender, age, major and grade. For this purpose, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000) which was adapted into Turkish by Öğüt and Olkun (2018) was conducted as a quantitative data collecting instrument in order to measure the students' intercultural sensitivity level. The scale had also a separate part including students' demographic information. The data were collected through a face-to-face survey in spring term in 2022. They were firstly coded and then analyzed through SPSS 20. Additionally, t-test and one-way ANOVA tests were conducted. The results of the study indicated that students' respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment level was found to be very high while interaction attentiveness, interaction engagement and interaction confidence levels were high. Moreover, it appeared that such variables as gender, age, major and grade did not influence students' intercultural sensitivity perceptions.

**Keywords:** Higher education, intercultural sensitivity, tourism

# YÜKSEK ÖĞRETİMDE TURİZM ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN KÜLTÜRLERARASI DUYARLILIK DERECELERİNİN İNCELENMESİ

**Özet**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinde Aşçılık ve Turizm ve Otel İşletmeciliği bölümlerinde okuyan önlisans öğrencilerinin kültürlerarası duyarlılık düzeylerini belirlemektir. Çalışma ayrıca öğrencilerin kültürlerarası duyarlılık düzeylerini cinsiyet, yaş, bölüm ve sınıf gibi bazı değişkenlere göre de araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla öğrencilerin kültürlerarası duyarlılık düzeylerini ölçmek için nicel veri toplama aracı olarak Öğüt ve Olkun (2018) tarafından Türkçeye uyarlanan Kültürlerarası Duyarlılık Ölçeği (Chen & Starosta, 2000) uygulanmıştır. Ölçekte öğrencilerin demografik bilgilerinin yer aldığı ayrı bir bölüm de bulunmaktadır. Veriler 2022 bahar döneminde yüz yüze anket yoluyla toplanmıştır. Toplanan veriler önce kodlanmış, ardından SPSS 20 ile analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca t-testi ve tek yönlü ANOVA testleri yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, öğrencilerin kültürel farklılıklara saygı duyma ve etkileşimden hoşlanma düzeylerinin çok yüksek olduğunu ve etkileşime dikkat, etkileşimde bulunma ve etkileşime güven düzeylerinin ise yüksek düzeyde olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca cinsiyet, yaş, bölüm ve sınıf gibi değişkenlerin öğrencilerin kültürlerarası duyarlılık algılarını etkilemediği ortaya çıkmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler: Yüksek Öğretim, kültürlerarası duyarlık, turizm**

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is consisted of "tolerance, multiculturality, cultural exchange, creation of general good and friendship" (UNWTO, 1999 as cited in Bobanovic & Grzinic, 2019: 86). People working in the field of tourism need to have good communication skills in order to get on well with people from different cultures. Besides, people are assumed to "have high level of cultural intelligence in order to provide effective and successful intercultural interaction" (Şenel, 2020: 362). In this vein, the current study first aimed to determine the tourism students' level of intercultural sensitivity and then explore its relationship in terms of age, gender, department and grade.

### 1.1. Cultural Sensitivity

Culture in its simplest form is described as "the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, traditions and customs learned and shared by a group of people and transferred from generation to generation" (Ören & Yücetürk, 2021: 54). It is also "a psychological factor that filters the perception of the individual" (San Martin & Rodríguez Del Bosque 2008 as cited in Beerli-Palacio & Martín-Santana, 2018: 105). There are various definitions of intercultural communication as Gudykunst (2003) defines it as "a communication or interaction between the people coming from different cultures" (as cited in Sipola, 2011: 10). It is "a process of interpersonal communication, direct, unmediated, which takes place between people aware of their cultural differences" (Albu, 2015: 11). For Dimitrova (2015), intercultural communication is a necessary factor in international tourism activity from different views as it is a compulsory factor in vocational tourism education and a criterion along with an agent necessary for the quality of tourism product. Additionally, it is "the activity itself (interaction between representatives of different cultures in the process of the professional tourism activity) and "an organizing principle". (Dimitrova, 2015: 227). She also acknowledges that in the context of cultural tourism, there is a close relationship between the organization of vocational education and implementation of intercultural communication in a successful way. Jhaiyanuntana and Nomnian (2020) suggest that intercultural communicative competence should be integrated into the tourism and hospitality program so that the students can improve an appreciation for other cultures and languages. Besides, the students need to have positive attitude towards cultural and linguistic diversity since it may provide them enhance important intercultural skills and knowledge.

There is much research on the students' intercultural communication sensitivity and its correlation with various variables (Abaslı & Polat, 2019; Bekiroğlu & Balcı, 2016; Korkmaz-Aslan, Kartal, Turan, Taşdemir-Yiğitoğlu & Kayan, 2019; Öğüt & Olkun, 2018; Tuncel & Arıcıoğlu, 2018; Türkmen & Saatçi, 2020). Abaslı and Polat (2019) investigated international and Turkish students' opinions about cultural intelligence and their cultural sensitivity. The study displayed that intercultural sensitivity had an important predictor of cultural intelligence. Moreover, the students from both groups had average levels of intercultural sensitivity, however; their cultural intelligence levels were found to be high. It was also demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference in gender variable although no significant difference was found in terms of the participants' nationality, age and educational level. The study concluded that there was a meaningful correlation between the variables and intercultural sensitivity was a significant predictor of cultural intelligence.

Bekiroğlu and Balcı (2016) explored the intercultural communication sensitivity of the students studying at a state university in Turkey. The findings of the study displayed significant differences between the students' intercultural sensitivity and the variables such as foreign language level, desire to live in a country in different culture, the frequency of communication with people from different cultures in social media, the request of benefiting from Erasmus exchange program and the frequency of follow up different countries' media. Additionally, the results did not show a statistically significant difference between gender and intercultural sensitivity. The study indicated that the most important factor influencing the students' level of intercultural sensitivity was interaction engagement and interaction attentiveness.

Öğüt and Olkun (2018) examined intercultural communication sensitivity of 436 foreign and Turkish students studying at Selçuk University in Turkey. The study indicated that interaction enjoyment and respect for cultural differences dimensions were the most important factor among others. The participants reported that they respected the values of people from different cultures, enjoyed interacting with people from different cultures and they thought that their culture was better than other cultures. The study also displayed that there was a statistically significant difference in terms of gender as female participants had higher scores than male participants in terms of respect for differences and enjoyment of interaction.

Tuncel and Arıcıoğlu (2018) studied on examining factors influencing cultural sensitivity perception levels of 524 students. The result of the study indicated that the participants had moderate level of intercultural sensitivity. It showed that the more grade level rises, the more students' intercultural

sensitivity perception level enhances. Besides, no statistically significant difference was found between intercultural sensitivity and gender.

Türkmen and Saatçi (2020) compared the intercultural sensitivity levels of participants studying in tourism faculties of two state universities in Turkey. The study demonstrated that the participants obtained the lowest mean score in the dimension of "interaction confidence" while they got the highest scores in "cultural sensitivity, "respect for cultural differences dimensions. The study emphasised the prominence of improving the levels of intercultural sensitivity of the students in the faculties of tourism.

Korkmaz-Aslan et al., (2019) explored the cultural sensitivity levels of students from the school of physical therapy and rehabilitation, medical faculty and nursing department. The findings revealed that the cultural sensitivity level of the participants was at a good level. Furthermore, cultural sensitivity was found to be higher among the participants who "had interaction with people from different cultures, whose opinions of their jobs changed positively during their education, who wanted to attend student exchange programs and who spoke a foreign language" (Korkmaz-Aslan et al., 2019: 190). The study also showed that gender had a significant impact on cultural sensitivity on behalf of female students.

### 1.2. Purpose of the study
Those who work or study in the domain of tourism need awareness of other people's cultures or differences as a lifelong process. Thus, the current study aimed to shed light on the students' intercultural sensitivity level in the context of tourism education. In the light of the information aforementioned, the following research questions were addressed for the purpose of the study:
      1. What is the current intercultural sensitivity level of the students?
      2. Does the students' intercultural sensitivity perception level differ in terms of gender, age, major and grade?

### 2. Methodology

The study was designed as a descriptive general survey research with a quantitative method in order to answer the research questions of the study. The students were verbally informed that their participation in the research would not affect their grade and completely voluntary. The data obtained from the students were collected through face to face survey in the spring term of 2021-2022 academic year. The data were firstly coded and then analyzed through SPSS 20. In a broader sense, descriptive statistics (percentages, standard deviations and means) were computed to display the students' answers to intercultural sensitivity items. Moreover, one-way ANOVA test and t-test were administered so as to find out the differences between intercultural sensitivity of the students and some variables such as gender, age, major and grade.

### 2.1. Participants

The present study was comprised of 60 participants studying in Tourism and Hotel Administration Vocational School of a public university located in the Eastern Turkey. 34 (56.7%) of the participants were from the department of Tourism and Hotel Management and 26 (43.3%) of them from Cooking department. Approximately 26 (43.3 %) of the participants identified themselves as female while 34 (56.7 %) identified themselves as male. With regard to age, there were 32 (53.3%) participants between the ages of 20- 22, 15 (25%) between the ages of 7-19, and 13 (21.7%) aged 23 and above. Concerning major, 25 (41.7%) of the participants were from Cooking department and 35 (58,3) of them from Tourism and Hotel Management department. Of the participants, 26 (43.3%) were freshmen and 34 (56.7%) were sophomores.

### 2.2. Data Collection Instruments

The data were collected through Demographic Information Form and Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. Demographic Information Form was comprised of the information related with gender, age, major and grade. The students were informed that their participation in the study was totally voluntary and the data collected would not be used anywhere else except from the present study. They were given 10 minutes to complete the form. Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) was used to measure the students' current level of intercultural sensitivity. Turkish version of the scale by Öğüt and Olkun (2018) was used for the purpose of the study. It was comprised of 24 items with a 5-point Likert-type response format ranging from "totally disagree" (1) to "totally agree" (5). "1.0-1.80"

was commented as very low, "1.81-2.60" low, "2.61-3.40" moderate, "3.41- 4.20" high and "4.21-5.0" very high. The scale covered three subdimensions as respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment with seven items (2, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 18), interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement with nine items (1, 11, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24) and interaction confidence with five items (3, 4, 5, 6, 10). Seven items like 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15 and 18 were conversely coded.

### 2.3. Validity and Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be .81 for the scale (Öğüt & Olkun, 2018).  Before analyzing the questionnaire, SPSS reliability analysis was administered so as to check the reliability of 24 items in the Intercultural Sensitivity Questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha Analysis was measured to find the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire. As Cronbach's alpha values of above 0,60 were considered reliable and ones above 0,80 were considered highly reliable. For this study, the Cronbach's Alpha was obtained to be.80 which was quite satisfactory. This analysis displayed that the results of these items were reliable. In detail, it was determined that the coefficient of respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment scale was 0,74, for interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement scale was 0.74, and for interaction confidence was .67.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive statistics by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, the results of which were illustrated through frequency distribution tables. The statistical significance level was used as $p < .05$ for all the independent sample findings. The Independent Samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were used in the analysis of the data.

### 3. Findings and results

1. What is the current intercultural sensitivity level of the students?

This section was dealt with the evaluation of the findings concerning the two research questions of the study. The first research question of the study was asked in order to elaborate the current intercultural sensitivity level of the participants. Table 1 illustrated the frequency of the student responses in percentages, means and standard deviations in each subcategory of intercultural sensitivity, namely respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment levels.

Table 1 Descriptive Results of Students' Respect for Cultural Differences and Interaction Enjoyment

| Respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment | 1+2(%) | 3(%) | 4+5(%) | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded. | 65 | 20 | 15 | 3.73 | 1.26 |
| 7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures. | 76.7 | 11.7 | 11.7 | 4.28 | 1.24 |
| 8. I respect the values of people from different cultures. | 5 | 10 | 85 | 4.51 | 1.03 |
| 9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different | 81 | 8.3 | 11.6 | 4.11 | 1.09 |
| 12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures. | 68.3 | 25 | 6.7 | 3.98 | .99 |
| 15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures. | 81.7 | 13.3 | 5 | 4.48 | 1.01 |
| 18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures. | 85 | 6.7 | 8.3 | 4.53 | .99 |

5-Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree

As shown in Table 1, the total mean score of respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment factor was 4.23 and it was at "very high" level. Regarding the item suggesting that the students would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures, it could be said that 85% of them disagreed with this as they were open to the ideas of people from other cultures.  Similarly, 81.7% of them stated that they did not often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures. Besides, they reported that they respected the values of people from different cultures at a high percentage (85%).

Table 2. Descriptive results of students' interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement

| interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement | 1+2(%) | 3(%) | 4+5(%) | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures | 13.3 | 11.7 | 75 | 4.06 | 1.19 |
| 11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts. | 16.6 | 36.7 | 46.6 | 3.50 | 1.09 |
| 13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures. | 6.7 | 20 | 73.3 | 4.10 | 1.00 |
| 14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures. | 8.3 | 23.3 | 68.3 | 3.95 | 1.06 |
| 17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures. | 11.7 | 11.7 | 76.7 | 4.20 | 1.10 |
| 19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's unclear meanings du ring our interaction. | 18.3 | 26.7 | 55 | 3.61 | 1.19 |
| 21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction. | 1.3 | 38.3 | 48.4 | 3.58 | 1.09 |
| 23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues. | 10 | 25 | 65 | 3.90 | 1.10 |
| 24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally- distinct counterpart and me. | 10 | 23.3 | 66.7 | 3.90 | 1.08 |

5-Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree

The total mean score of interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement was found to be 3.86 and it was at 'high' level as displayed in Table 2. The students obtained high mean scores in all items of the scale. In more details, 76.7% of the students reported that they tried to obtain as much information as they could when interacting with people from different cultures, 73.3% were open-minded to people from different cultures and 75% of them enjoyed interacting with people from different cultures at high percentages. However, less than half of the students tended to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts and often gave positive responses to their culturally different counterpart during our interaction.

Table 3. Descriptive Results of Students' Interaction Confidence Level

| Interaction confidence | 1+2(%) | 3(%) | 4+5(%) | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures. | 10 | 30 | 60 | 3.78 | 1.02 |
| 4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures. | 35 | 33.3 | 31.7 | 3.20 | 1.21 |
| 5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures. | 11.6 | 33.3 | 55 | 3.60 | 1.01 |
| 6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures. | 11.6 | 21.7 | 66.7 | 3.78 | 1.04 |
| 10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures. | 16.7 | 48.3 | 35 | 3.25 | .98 |

5-Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree

The total mean score of interaction confidence was obtained as 3.50 and it was the lowest mean score among other subcategories of the scale while it was still at 'high' level as shown in Table 3 above. In other words, the students reported that 60% of them were pretty sure of themselves in interacting with people from different cultures and 66.7% could be as sociable as they wanted to be when interacting with people from different cultures at high percentages. While 31.7% of the participants found it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures 33.3% of them were neutral and 35% of them disagreed. Additionally, half of them were neutral about feeling confident when interacting with people from different cultures (48.3%).

2. Does the students' intercultural sensitivity perception level differ in terms of gender, age, major and grade levels?

Since the study was designed to investigate the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and the effect of gender, age, major and grade, t-test and ANOVA were performed. With this aim, firstly, the effect of gender was analyzed as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4. Intercultural Sensitivity and Gender

| Group | Gender | N | M | Sd | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment | Female | 28 | 4,22 | ,74 | -,117 | ,663 |
| | Male | 32 | 4,24 | ,64 | -116 | |
| Interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement | Female | 28 | 3,90 | ,68 | ,410 | ,481 |
| | Male | 32 | 3,83 | ,60 | ,407 | |
| Interaction confidence | Female | 28 | 3,42 | ,62 | -,844 | ,274 |
| | Male | 32 | 3,57 | ,76 | ,856 | |

As indicated in Table 4, gender was not a statistically significant contributor to the participants' intercultural sensitivity for all of the subcategories namely cultural differences and interaction enjoyment, interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement and interaction confidence. Specifically speaking, the mean score of the male students was slightly higher than their female counterparts in the factor of respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment ($\bar{X}$=4.24) and interaction confidence ($\bar{X}$=3.57). However, female participants got higher mean score in the factor of interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement ($\bar{X}$=3.90). These findings indicated that the participants' gender did not affect their intercultural sensitivity level.

Secondly, Table 5 showed the relationship between the intercultural sensitivity level of the participants and their age.

Table 5. Intercultural Sensitivity and Age

| Subcategories | Age | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment | Between Groups | ,843 | 2 | ,422 | ,885 | ,418 |
| | Within Groups | 27,149 | 57 | ,476 | | |
| | Total | 27,993 | 59 | | | |
| interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement | Between Groups | ,687 | 2 | ,343 | ,845 | ,435 |
| | Within Groups | 23,177 | 57 | ,407 | | |
| | Total | 23,864 | 59 | | | |
| Interaction confidence | Between Groups | ,414 | 2 | ,207 | ,413 | ,664 |
| | Within Groups | 28,586 | 57 | ,502 | | |
| | Total | 28,999 | 59 | | | |

Table 5 demonstrated that there was not a statistically significant difference between participants' age and their intercultural sensitivity namely respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment , $F_{(2,57)}$=.885, p > 0.05, interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement, $F_{(2,57)}$=.845, p > 0.05, and interaction confidence $F_{(2,57)}$=413, p > 0.05. In other words, the students' age did not contribute to their intercultural sensitivity level.

Thirdly, the current study also intended to investigate the possible effect of the students' major on their level of intercultural sensitivity as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Intercultural Sensitivity and Major

| Subcategories | Major | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment | Between Groups | 1,642 | 1 | 1,642 | 3,613 | ,062 |
| | Within Groups | 26,351 | 58 | ,454 | | |
| | Total | 27,993 | 59 | | | |
| interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement | Between Groups | ,955 | 1 | ,955 | 2,417 | ,125 |
| | Within Groups | 22,909 | 58 | ,395 | | |
| | Total | 23,864 | 59 | | | |
| Interaction confidence | Between Groups | ,026 | 1 | ,026 | ,052 | ,820 |
| | Within Groups | 28,973 | 58 | ,500 | | |
| | Total | 28,999 | 59 | | | |

An analysis of variance demonstrated that the effect of department did not show a significant difference in the factors of respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment factor, $F(1,58)$ 3.613, p > 0.05, interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement factor, F(1,58) 2.417, p > 0.05 and interaction confidence factor, F(1,58) .052, p > 0.05 as could be seen in Table 6. Concerning the results of the study, the students from Cooking department had higher mean scores of intercultural sensitivity in the factors of the interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement (M=4.01) and interaction confidence (M=3.52) than the students from Tourism and Hotel Management (M=3.76 and M=3.48). On contrary, the students from Tourism and Hotel Management had higher mean score in the factor of respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment (M=4.37) than the students from Cooking department (M=4.04).

Finally, the impact of students' grade was analyzed and the results of ANOVA were given in Table 7.

Table 7. Intercultural Sensitivity and Grade

| Subcategories | Grade | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment | Between Groups | ,350 | 1 | ,350 | ,735 | ,395 |
| | Within Groups | 27,643 | 58 | ,477 | | |
| | Total | 27,993 | 59 | | | |
| interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement | Between Groups | ,147 | 1 | ,147 | ,359 | ,551 |
| | Within Groups | 23,717 | 58 | ,409 | | |
| | Total | 23,864 | 59 | | | |
| Interaction confidence | Between Groups | ,248 | 1 | ,248 | ,501 | ,482 |
| | Within Groups | 28,751 | 58 | ,496 | | |

| | Total | 28,999 | 59 |
|---|---|---|---|

The results of the analysis indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the participants' intercultural sensitivity and their grade as shown in Table 7. Regarding the results of the study, sophomores had higher mean scores of intercultural sensitivity in the factors of respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment (M=4.30) and the interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement (M=3.91) than freshmen (M=4.14 and M=3.81). However, freshmen obtained higher mean scores (M=3.57) than the sophomores (M=3.44) in interaction confidence.

## 4. Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to determine the intercultural sensitivity levels of tourism students and explore whether the intercultural sensitivity differed based on different variables such as age, gender, major and grade. It has been displayed that tourism students had high level of intercultural sensitivity on contrary to the previous studies which indicated that the students' level of intercultural sensitivity was at moderate level (Abaslı & Polat, 2019). The findings of the study also showed that tourism students had the highest mean score of intercultural sensitivity in the factor of respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment (Öğüt & Olkun, 2018; Türkmen & Saatçi, 2020). While the students would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures they reported that they respected the values of people from different cultures in line with the results of some studies (Öğüt & Olkun, 2018).

In accordance with the second research question of the study, first, students' intercultural sensitivity was investigated in relation to gender. The results revealed that there was not a significant difference between male and female participants. This finding did not support the previous studies which demonstrated that gender affected students' intercultural sensitivity level (Öğüt & Olkun, 2018; Abaslı & Polat, 2019; Korkmaz-Aslan, et al., & Kayan, 2019; Tuncel & Arıcıoğlu, 2018). Specifically, it was possible to say that male students had slightly higher intercultural sensitivity level than females in the subcategories of interaction confidence and respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment. However, female participants obtained higher mean score in the factor of interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement (Öğüt & Olkun, 2018). Regarding this finding, it was understood that more research was needed in order to figure out the effect of gender on intercultural sensitivity.

Second, students' intercultural sensitivity was explored in terms of age. Regarding age variable, there was not a statistically significant difference between age and intercultural sensitivity of the participants (Abaslı & Polat, 2019). Specifically speaking, the students who were 23 years old and above had higher mean score than those who were between 17-19 and 20-22 in the factors of respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment and interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement. On the other hand, the students who were 20-22 years old had slightly higher mean score than others in the factor of interaction confidence.

Another finding of the study was that intercultural sensitivity level of the students from Cooking department did not significantly differed from those from Tourism and Hotel Management department. The students from both majors had equal intercultural sensitivity level.

In terms of grade level, there was not a statistically significant difference between intercultural sensitivity and the students' grade. However, based on the results, it was found that when grade level enhanced, respect for cultural differences and interaction enjoyment and interaction attentiveness and interaction engagement perception levels of the participants increased as confirmed by the previous study (Tuncel & Arıcıoğlu, 2018). However, freshmen had more interaction confidence than sophomores.

By looking at the general findings of the study, it was recommended that some courses including improvement of intercultural sensitivity needed to be offered (Tuncel & Arıcıoğlu, 2018) for the curriculum of the Tourism faculties and vocational schools. Moreover, it was understood that developing the students' intercultural sensitivity level was very important in the vocational schools and tourism faculties (Türkmen & Saatçi, 2020).

There were some limitations related to the study. The current study was conducted with the tourism students just in one university using quantitative research methodology. Some further studies with the students of different universities using both qualitative and quantitative research instruments could be

suggested. Moreover, this study was done with a limited number of participants but future research could be done with larger amount of participants.

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