



# Unraveling Cultural Intelligence and Its Impact on Perceived Employability Among Undergraduate Students in Philippines' Public Universities

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**Abstract.** Managing a multicultural environment has been increasingly challenging in the workplace. Higher education institutions are expected to play an active role in developing and promoting necessary skills for students to be adaptive in a diverse workplace after graduation. Cultural intelligence becomes a necessary soft skill to communicate effectively in a cross-cultural environment. By analyzing 1333 questionnaire feedback of students from Philippines public universities, this study investigates the level of CQ of the undergraduate students and the relationship between CQ and perceived employability among undergraduate students. The results show that students have a high metacognitive CQ and a low cognitive level. A Moderate and positive relationship was found between CQ and employability among students. There is a significant relationship between CQ and employability that increases the level of CQ. As such, we recommend that universities and colleges invest in improving the students' cultural intelligence to improve their performance in cross-cultural environments and design appropriate programs in the school curriculum to develop their CQ.

**Keywords:** cultural intelligence · perceived employability · public universities · higher education institution

## 1 Introduction

The Philippines is a multicultural country whose distinct cultural traditions are overlaid with influences from Malay, Hindu, Arab, Spanish, Chinese, American migration, trade, and conquest [1]. Cultural diversity has been a significant challenge to the country's social stability. The Philippines government has made serious efforts to promote the Philippine culture and values towards the Filipino spirit of "Bayanihan" as stipulated in the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022 (National Economic Development Authority, n.d.). One of the strategies is to intensify the development, production, dissemination, and liberalization of access to information on Filipino culture. This is to ensure that Filipinos are adaptive or culturally intelligent.

A previous study shows that cultural intelligence was a needed skill in the Fourth Industrial Revolution [2]. Chen et al. [3] found that the level of CQ was positively related to the performance of Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan. Hence, higher education institutions must recognize the importance of students' CQ in adapting to cultural differences and a diverse environment to ensure employability.

Thus, the current study seeks to measure the level of cultural intelligence among undergraduate students in public universities in the Philippines. Specifically, it aims to investigate the relationship between CQ and perceived employability among undergraduate students.

## 1.1 Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) has garnered wide attention recently across disciplines from psychology, educational management, organizational and group management, and intercultural communication. CQ is defined as the capability to function well in culturally diverse situations [4]. Scholars have documented the role of CQ in the acculturation process and adaptive outcomes in minority groups [5] and various effects of CQ on performance [6–8] and cross-cultural adjustment [9, 10].

Drawing on Stenberg and Detterman's [11] integrative framework of multiple-loci view of intelligence, CQ is conceptualized into four parts: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Metacognitive CQ refers to the mental capabilities focused on higher-order cognitive processes that individuals use to acquire and understand cultural knowledge [12]. Cognitive CQ reflects the mental functioning of individuals' cultural knowledge gained from education and personal experience, including using knowledge of self, the social environment, and information processing embedded in a cultural context [4]. Meanwhile, motivational CQ involves one's mental capability to direct and sustain efforts toward functioning in multicultural interactions. It is a person's drive, interest, and confidence to be adaptive and function effectively in cross-cultural encounters and contact [13]. Lastly, behavioral CQ is cultural intelligence's action aspect or behavioral capabilities. It refers to a person's ability to be culturally appropriate in verbal and non-verbal communications [4].

In an organization that operates in a multicultural environment, a leader's cultural intelligence greatly influences the organization's performance [14]. In other words, today's leaders and individuals have the flexibility to adapt to any new cultural situation they face consciously. CQ should be considered a critical competency in the modern world and should be taught in universities and colleges. Ishakova [15] found that motivational and behavioral facets of CQ positively correlate with interactional adjustment. Students with higher interactional adjustment tend to interact and build connections not only with students from their own culture but also undertake an active approach to making friends and extending connections to local people and people with vastly diverse cultural backgrounds.

## 1.2 Employability

Perceived employability is defined as "individual's perception of his or her possibilities of obtaining and maintaining employment" [16]. Employability enables the individual

to cope with unpredictable, unstable, and more flexible employment relations. In other words, being employable is a way for the individual to prepare for dealing with a turbulent organizational environment. Romgens et al. [17] identified six dimensions of employability in higher education research: applying disciplinary knowledge, transferable generic skills, emotional regulation, career development skills, self-management, and self-efficacy.

## 2 Methods

This study employed a survey research design using a random sampling technique. The sample population comprised 1,333 students from five state universities and colleges in the Philippines. Pre-existing questionnaires were distributed randomly to the respondents. There are three sections in the questionnaire. Section A includes demographic details of the respondents, such as gender, type of university, and living area. Section B is the 20-item Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) adapted from Ang et al. [18]. Out of the 20 items, four items measured metacognitive CQ, six items measured cognitive CQ, and five items measured motivational CQ and behavioral CQ, respectively. The items were administered using a 10-point Likert-type scale, asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree to 10 = Strongly Agree). Pilot-test of the questionnaire indicated that all items met the acceptable Cronbach's alpha score with a value of .931. For each dimension, metacognitive achieved .79 and cognitive and motivational .90 respectively, while behavioral was at .91. Section C measures the perceived employability among graduates. The items were administered via a 10-point Likert scale asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement (1 = Strongly disagree to 10 = Strongly Agree).

The data analysis was conducted using the SPSS 22 statistical software. Multiple regression was conducted to measure the level of CQ and the relationship between CQ and employability among undergraduate students in the Philippines. Moreover, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to measure the contributing dimensions of employability.

## 3 Results

### 3.1 Socio-Demographic Profile

The research data were obtained from public universities in the Philippines. Most of the respondents were females (67%). The respondents were primarily Christian (96%) in terms of religious affiliation. Approximately two-thirds of the undergraduate students were from state universities (62%), while other students indicated state colleges (38%). 47% of the respondents lived in rural areas, while 40% lived in urban areas (Table 1).

### 3.2 Level of Cultural Intelligence

Table 2 presents the level of cultural intelligence among undergraduate students in public universities in the Philippines. Metacognitive CQ has the highest mean of 7.67, and cognitive CQ has the lowest mean score of 6.42. The total CQ, which is represented by the mean of all four dimensions, is 7.07.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic profile

Gender	N	%
Male	379	30%
Female	852	67%
Prefer not to say	27	2%
Others	6	0.50%
Total	1264	100%
Religious Affiliation		
Christian	1208	96%
Islam	46	4%
Others	10	1%
Total	1264	100%
Type of school		
State college	482	38%
State university	782	62%
Total	1264	100%
Living		
Urban	510	40%
Sub-urban	161	13%
Rural	593	47%
Total	1264	100%

**Table 2.** The level of cultural intelligence among undergraduate students in public universities in the Philippines

Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation
Metacognitive	7.67	1.68
Cognitive	6.42	1.69
Motivational	7.03	1.70
Behavioral	7.15	1.72
Over – all Mean	7.07	1.70

### 3.3 Relationship Between CQ and Perceived Employability Among Undergraduate Students

Table 3 presents the analysis between undergraduate students' employability and cultural intelligence. The result shows that employability and cultural intelligence has a moderate and positive correlation with the value of 0.686. Thus, as the level of cultural intelligence

**Table 3.** Model Summary: Cultural Intelligence vs Employability

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.686a	0.471	0.471	1.11604

<sup>a</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Cultural Intelligence

increases, the level of employability also increases. In addition, as the level of cultural intelligence decreases, the level of employability also decreases. Students with high cultural intelligence tend to have high employability. Similarly, students with low cultural intelligence tend to have low employability. In other words, cultural intelligence and employability are directly proportional or go in the same direction.

The value of 0.471 indicates the total variation in employability. Hence, for this case, there is 47.1% that the employability as a dependent variable can be explained by the cultural intelligence as an independent variable. Moreover, the significant value of the model in the ANOVA is 0.000. This value is less than 0.05 as a level of significance. This indicates that the model significantly predicts cultural intelligence's response variable or employability. Also, the B value in the coefficients table is 0.738, indicating a 0.738 increase in employability for every 1-point increase in cultural intelligence.

## 4 Results and Discussion

This study aims to measure the level of cultural intelligence among undergraduate students in the Philippine state universities and colleges. We also investigate the relationship between CQ and perceived employability among the students.

The study's findings show that students have a high level of metacognitive CQ and a low level of cognitive CQ. These findings are somewhat surprising because while students are aware of culture when interacting with different cultural settings, they also show less cultural knowledge of the environment in which they operate. These results are consistent with the study of Gooden et al. [13], who showed that students from an American university have a high level of metacognitive CQ and a low level of cognitive CQ. One plausible explanation is that individuals with high metacognitive CQ are consciously aware of the cultural situation of others, and they are more likely to modify their behaviors to adapt to these situations. In contrast, those with high cognitive CQ do not necessarily translate into actions and behaviors (Tables 4 and 5).

There is a significant relationship between CQ and perceived employability among students. Students with high CQ tend to increase their perceived employability. Similarly, students with low CQ tend to have low perceived employability. This supports the previous study that CQ positively impacts employability.

**Table 4.** ANOVA<sup>a,b</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1390.068	1	1390.068	1116.039	0.000b
	Residual	1560.658	1253	1.246		
	Total	2950.726	1254			

<sup>a</sup>Dependent Variable: Employability<sup>b</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Cultural Intelligence**Table 5.** Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.294	0.158		14.504	0.000
	Cultural Intelligence	0.738	0.022	0.686	33.407	0.000

<sup>a</sup>Dependent Variable: Employability

## 5 Conclusion

The current study serves as a baseline for measuring CQ among undergraduate students in the Philippine state universities and colleges. The study's findings could help schools and administrators to students' CQ to have better employability. Moreover, this study could serve as a basis for the government to strengthen its promotion of cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, and cultural sensitivity among Filipinos.

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