

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY SCALE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

Ayşe Duran Yılmaz^{1*}, Esra Ömeroğlu²

¹Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Adıyaman University, Adıyaman, TURKEY

²Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Gazi Education, Gazi University, Ankara, TURKEY

aduran@adiyaman.edu.tr¹, omeroglu@gazi.edu.tr²

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to create and validate a scale for early childhood educators that reflects the cultural sensitivity of educators in classrooms. We collected data from 403 early childhood educators in Adıyaman, Turkey. Experts' assessments were consulted for content validity, and EFA and CFA were done for the reliability and validity of the scale. The internal consistency coefficient was calculated based on the reliability of the study. The result of scale development was a 29-item, 3-factor scale that shows evidence of reliability, validity, and practical usability for further research. The three factors of the Cultural Sensitivity Scale for Early Childhood Educators consist of "acceptance of cultural differences," "adaptation of cultural differences," and "rejecting cultural differences." The relationship among subscales was tested and it was seen that the sub-dimensions of 'Acceptance of Cultural Differences' and 'Adaptation to Cultural Differences' were positively related to each other and that these two sub-dimensions were negatively and significantly related to the sub-dimension of 'Rejecting Cultural Differences'. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) also confirmed the results of EFA. Factor analysis results showed that the scale had three factors and Cronbach's α was .743.

Keywords: cultural sensitivity, early childhood educators, cultural sensitivity scale

INTRODUCTION

Many nations can be affected by events such as war, economic crises, climatic crises, and natural catastrophes. These modifications can let diverse cultures coexist within the social framework. This might result in intercultural dialogue. Individuals can build a common language in intercultural communication by recognizing and embracing diversity (Aydm & Şahin, 2017). Accepting and respecting the existence of persons with various cultural values is the foundation of intercultural dialogue. Culturally sensitive people promote universal principles in society. Cultural sensitivity is mostly associated with the emotional domain and involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. The cognitive level is represented by intercultural awareness, the emotional level by intercultural sensitivity, and the behavioral level by intercultural competence (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Milton Bennett is well-known for his work on cultural sensitivity. He created the "Developmental Model of Intercultural

Sensitivity," which is a reaction to the notion of difference that originates and is perpetuated through the perceptual process of human experiences (Barron & Dasli, 2010). This paradigm is individualistic and explains how people see differences and acquire cultural sensitivity (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). The model's basic assumption is that as one's experience with cultural difference gets more complicated, so does one's prospective competency in intercultural relations (Hammer et al., 2003). Bennett divided the developmental intercultural sensitivity concept into two sub-categories, "ethnocentrism" and "ethnorelativism," and examined the individual's responses to cultural differences in six developmental phases, beginning with "ethnocentrism" and progressing to "ethnorelativism." While the assumption that life choices and worldviews are better is prevalent in ethnocentrism, it is considered that cultures can only be known about each other and that this conduct can only be grasped in a cultural context, according to Bennett (Lee-Olson & Kroeger, 2001). The transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism is divided into six stages: denying, arguing, decreasing, accepting, adapting, and integrating. Individuals in the denial stage dismiss and typically disregard cultural differences, whereas those in the acceptance stage embrace the people of their own culture as the sole reality (Hammer et al., 2003; Hernandez & Kose, 2012). Defensive people, on the other hand, believe that their culture is the finest way to live or the best civilization that has evolved over time. It is described as a posture in which people or groups reject the influence of specific cultural distinctions viewed as a danger (Lee-Olson & Kroeger, 2001). At this point, people perceive cultural differences but embrace the belief that all people are the same, emphasizing similarities rather than differences. This reduces cultural distinctions. People that highlight the similarities between people exhibit a discounting of diversity, believing that all people are basically the same (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). When someone acknowledges cultural differences, they acknowledge and accept such differences and think of culture as a circumstance that influences how people behave. One culture is not better or worse than another at this point for the person. It is described as accepting cultural variances and viewing one's own culture as merely one among a few equally valid worldviews (Hammer et al., 2003). As they become used to cultural differences, people at this stage can demonstrate empathy and have the capacity to adopt a new viewpoint when they meet people from other cultures. They can interact with people from other cultures efficiently. At this point, people can adjust their worldview and conduct to communicate effectively with others from different cultures (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). The individual has assimilated more than one cultural viewpoint, and as a result of integrating cultural differences, she may have a sense of belonging to two or more cultural groups. The individual, who is at ease with cultural relativism, reacts correctly by making judgments about the circumstance. People attempt to integrate many identifying characteristics into a cohesive whole while being cultural outsiders (Lee Olson & Kroeger, 2001). According to nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, physical traits, sexual orientation, economic position, education, and employment, cultural diversity refers to the different values, beliefs, and behaviors that different groups of people who interact have learnt and shared (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

Cultural variety is increased by mass population movements and the push toward globalization. As a component of social life, educational institutions are likewise affected by this variety. Children from diverse cultural backgrounds study together in schools. It serves as the cornerstone of a tranquil communal life. Children from many cultures should thus receive a wholesome education in schools. Haberman and Post (1990) state that supporting teacher training programs to prepare individuals for life in a multicultural society is not sufficient. Larke (1990), on the other hand, states that teachers should be more culturally sensitive to all children, regardless of the children's different backgrounds, because diversity and inclusion are so important in the teaching and learning process. Managing classes with diverse demographics

is one of the challenges that today's teachers confront. Teachers are obliged to employ tactics that apply the teaching-student process more successfully and are more attentive to class disparities when classroom environments include diverse cultures. While teachers are trying to manage their classrooms with cultural sensitivities, they are trying to manage using their own experiences and cultural knowledge, together with the changing demographic structure of the classroom (Garcia & Pantao, 2021). The cultural sensitivity of teachers is crucial in handling the diversity in the classroom. One of the main responsibilities of the educator is to be aware of how the children from other cultures feel about them and how much they know about them (Gabriel et al., 2011).

Institutions that provide early childhood education are at the forefront of providing children with exposure to many cultures. Teachers therefore have enormous obligations. Children in the classroom should be encouraged by early life teachers to respect one another. Teachers should know the cultural backgrounds of all children in the class so that children do not form prejudices against each other and show negative behavior. In this direction, the cultural sensitivities of teachers come to the fore. Working with children from different cultures can be a difficult process for early childhood educators. Therefore, identifying teachers' cultural sensitivities can be supportive in working with children from different cultures. In this study, therefore, we develop a valid and reliable instrument that reveals the cultural sensitivity of early childhood educators.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop a scale to determine the cultural sensitivity of early childhood educators. For this aim, this study focuses on the validity and reliability of the Cultural Sensitivity Scale for Early Childhood Educators, which was developed.

METHOD

Participants

The sample group of this study consisted of 403 teachers from preschools in Adiyaman. In this study, the appropriate sample method, which is a common sample method in education studies regarding cost and reachability (Muijs, 2004) was used. The researcher works on the most accessible sample until a group of the required size is available (Berg, 2001). Table 1 presents the sample's full demographic information.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of teachers.

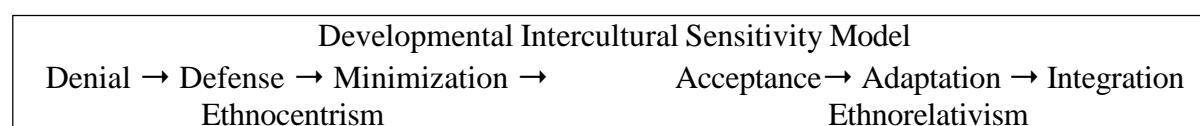
| | | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-----------------|------------------|----------|----------|
| Gender | Female | 318 | 78,9 |
| | Male | 85 | 21,1 |
| Education level | Associate degree | 7 | 1,7 |
| | Undergraduate | 372 | 92,3 |
| | Master | 24 | 6,0 |
| Work experience | 1-5 years | 196 | 48,6 |
| | 6-10 years | 123 | 30,5 |

continued

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----|------|
| | 11-15 years | 52 | 12,9 |
| | 16 years and up | 32 | 7,9 |
| School type | Independent Preschool | 223 | 55,3 |
| | Kindergarten | 180 | 44,7 |
| The working status of foreign children | Yes | 210 | 52,1 |
| | No | 193 | 47,9 |
| Total | | 403 | 100 |

Item and Scale Development

Firstly, extensive literature searches were carried out for the development of the Cultural Sensitivity Scale for Early Childhood Educators (CSSECE). Items were written based on Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity after the examination in this context. The Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity describes the reactions of individuals when they meet cultural differences. Bennett identified the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity in two sub-categories, "ethnocentrism" and "ethnorelativism," and there are six developmental stages, including denial of cultural differences, defense against cultural differences, minimization of cultural differences, acceptance of cultural differences, the adaptation of cultural differences, and integration of cultural differences, from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism.



A set of items 38 questions covering these six stages of development was prepared as a data-collecting tool. A content validity study is carried out to determine to what extent the items in the scale represent the behaviors, attitudes, and situations to be measured and to determine their suitability for the scale (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The expert opinions were consulted for content validity in this respect. Items in the scale were considered by a total of five experts, including four field specialists and one measurement and evaluation expert. An evaluation form was prepared for the experts to determine whether the items in the scale were appropriate. Within the scope of the evaluation form from the experts, the wording was changed in some items. Moreover, according to the results of the Fleiss kappa test performed to determine the reliability of inter-expert agreement; The Fleiss Kappa coefficient was calculated as ($\kappa=0.857$), so it can be said that there is almost perfect agreement between the experts.

Respondents were asked to rate each belief item separately, where 0 = 'totally disagree', 1 = 'disagree', 2 = 'nor agree/nor disagree', 3 = 'agree', and 4 = 'totally agree'. The scale form also included a demographic questionnaire about gender, educational level, work experience, school types, and the working status of foreign children. In addition, the volunteer form is given to the participants.

Data Analysis

Within the scope of this study, missing, incorrect and extreme values in the data set were examined before starting the analysis of the data. It was revealed that there was no missing data as a result of the examination. The validity and reliability of analysis were conducted under the

data obtained. The participants were randomly divided into two groups in this current study (n1=204, n2=199). The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on the first group and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the second group. In addition, Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) value and Bartlett Sphericity test were applied to determine the suitability of the obtained data for principal component analysis. Cronbach alpha (Cr α) coefficient was also examined to provide evidence for reliability.

Ethics Committee

Ethical approval from Adiyaman University, Ethic Committee of Social and Human Sciences, Adiyaman University, was obtained at the start of this research (Ethic Cod: 10/11/2020-21).

RESULTS

Construct Validity

The researchers used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test and Bartlett's test to validate the adequacy of the dataset. In scale development studies, the KMO coefficient gives information about whether the data are suitable for factor analysis and is expected to be higher than .60 (Field, 2005). The Bartlett test, on the other hand, shows whether there is a relationship between the variables, and the significant result of this test is accepted as proof of the normality of the scores (Büyükoztürk, 2011). The KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test results obtained as a result of the analysis are given in Table 2.

Table 2

The Results of KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test of Cultural Sensitivity Scale for Early Childhood Educators

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| KMO- Measure of Sampling Adequacy | | 0.87547 |
| Bartlett's Sphericity Test | Approximately Chi-square | 2216.2 |
| | Degree of freedom | 406 |
| | Significant (<i>p</i>) | 0.00 |

* $p < .001$

As seen in Table 2, the KMO value of the study was found to be .87 and the Bartlett Sphericity test result was found to be $p < 0.01$. These results show that the sample is sufficient for EFA, and this scale is suitable for factor analysis.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

EFA was conducted on the data to investigate the structure of 38 items. It was seen that the scale items were gathered under 3 factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1, and these factors explained 58% of the variance as a result of EFA. When item factor loads were examined, those below .30 that did not load any item, overlapping items, and items that loaded more than one factor were excluded from the scale. In this context, 9 items (I1, I2, I5, I8, I9, I10, I13, I26, I31) were removed from the scale and EFA was repeated over the remaining 29 items. As a

result of the analysis, it was seen that the 29-item scale gathered 3 factors with an eigenvalue higher than 1. The factors under which the scale items are collected, factor loads, and common variances are given in Table 3.

Table 3

The Results of EFA of Cultural Sensitivity Scale for Early Childhood Educators

| Items | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| I3 | | | 0.510 |
| I4 | | | 0.464 |
| I6 | | | 0.556 |
| I7 | | | 0.720 |
| I11 | | | 0.745 |
| I12 | | | 0.738 |
| I14 | | | 0.633 |
| I15 | | | 0.759 |
| I16 | | | 0.741 |
| I17 | | | 0.723 |
| I18 | | | 0.629 |
| I19 | 0.645 | | |
| I20 | 0.775 | | |
| I21 | 0.714 | | |
| I22 | 0.802 | -0.311 | |
| I23 | 0.682 | | |
| I24 | 0.465 | | |
| I25 | | 0.743 | |
| I27 | 0.598 | | |
| I28 | 0.786 | | |
| I29 | 0.772 | | |
| I30 | 0.770 | | |
| I32 | 0.750 | | |
| I33 | | 0.802 | |
| I34 | 0.782 | | |
| I35 | 0.515 | 0.357 | |
| I36 | | 0.877 | |
| I37 | 0.309 | 0.457 | |
| I38 | 0.783 | | |
| Self-worth | 10,32 | 4,71 | 1,99 |
| Variance accounted | %35,59 | %16,26 | %6,87 |
| Total Variance | %58,73 | | |

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the eigenvalue of the developed scale is higher than 1 and gathered in 3 factors. It was found that all factors explained 58.73% of the total variance. As a result of EFA, it is recommended that the total variance be 50% or more and the item factor load value should be .40 and above to show an item under the factor (Thompson, 2004; Büyüköztürk, 2008). According to the information in the table, the first factor explains 35.59% of the total variance. The first-factor load consists of 14 items (I19-I20-I21-I22-I23-I24-I27-I28-I29-I30-I32-I34-I35-I38) varying between .465 and .802. The first factor was named 'Acceptance of Cultural Differences'. The second factor, named 'Adaptation to Cultural Differences', explains 16.26% of the total variance. In this factor, there are 4 items (I25-I33-

I36-I37) with factor loadings varying between .457 and .877. The third factor explains 6.87% of the total variance and consists of 11 items (I3-I4-I6-I7-I11-I12-I14-I15-I16-I17-M18). The factor loads of these items ranged from .464 to .759. The third factor was named 'Rejecting Cultural Differences'.

The relationship between the sub-dimensions of the scale was examined in the same research group. The correlation coefficients between the sub-dimensions of the scale are presented in Table 4. According to the results of the analysis, it was seen that the sub-dimensions of 'Acceptance of Cultural Differences' and 'Adaptation to Cultural Differences' were positively related to each other and that these two sub-dimensions were negatively and significantly related to the sub-dimension of 'Rejecting Cultural Differences'.

Table 4
Correlation Coefficients between Factors

| Factors | Acceptance of Cultural Differences | Adaptation of Cultural Differences | Rejecting Cultural Differences |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Acceptance of Cultural Differences | 1.000 | | |
| Adaptation of Cultural Differences | 0.577* | 1.000 | |
| Rejecting Cultural Differences | -0.270* | -0.350* | 1.000 |

* $p < 0.01$

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was tested to confirm the 3-factor structure of the Teacher Cultural Sensitivity Scale, which emerged as a result of EFA. The model obtained by CFA is shown in Figure 1 below.

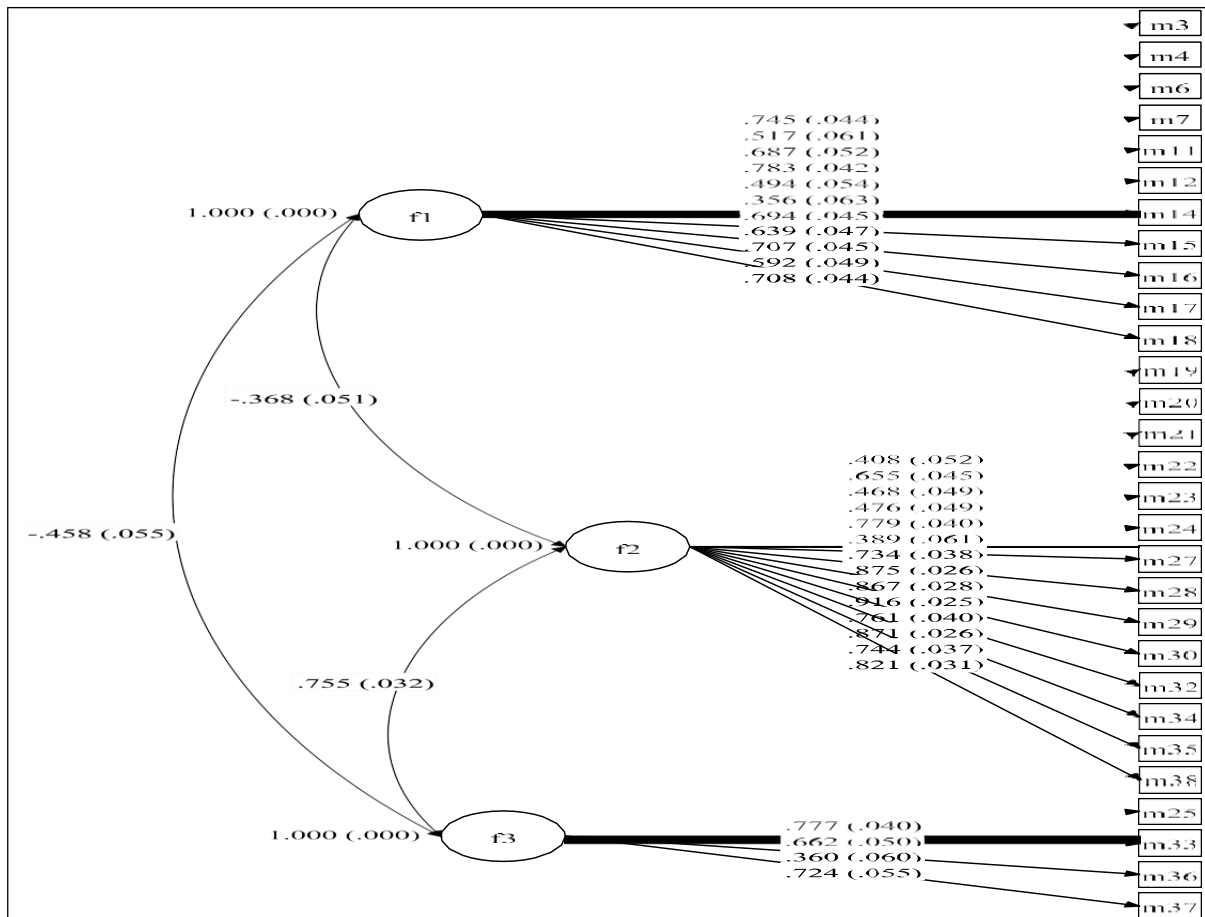


Figure 1. Path Diagram Showing Factor Loads for the Model

The CFA values and the cut-off points for this study are given in Table 5.

Table 5
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results and Breakpoints

| χ^2 | χ^2/df | P | CFI | TLI | RMSEA | S-RMR |
|----------|-------------|--------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1000.737 | 2.675 | 0,0000 | .830 | .816 | .092 | .097 |

When the fit indices of the model in Table 5 are examined, it is seen that the χ^2/df value is 2.675. A value less than 2 indicates a perfect fit, and a value less than 3 indicates an acceptable fit (Kelloway, 1998; Kline, 2010). Accordingly, it can be said that there is an acceptable fit according to this value in the scale. The comparative fit index (CFI) is seen to be .830. For the CFI value, values of 0.90 or higher are indicated to indicate an acceptable fit (Bryne, 2001). The TLI (Trucker-Lewis Index) value of the model is .816, indicating that the fit values of the model are appropriate (Byrne, 1994; Kline, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The Root Error Mean Squares (RMSEA) of the estimate turned out to be .092, indicating that this value is acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Vieira, 2011). The standardized root residual mean squares (SRMR) value of the model is .097. A SRMR value of .08 and below indicates a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Findings Regarding Reliability

The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated to determine the reliability of the Teacher Cultural Sensitivity Scale. It was discovered to be .743 on the whole scale. In the sub-dimensions of the scale, the α value for the cultural difference acceptance factor was calculated as .875, the α value for the cultural difference adaptation factor was calculated as .724, and the α value for the cultural rejection factor was calculated .858. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) stated that the Cronbach Alpha coefficient should be .70 and above. Accordingly, it can be said that the Teacher Cultural Sensitivity Scale is reliable.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

The effects of the growing refugee population in recent years are reflected in educational environments. Refugee children have the option of studying in schools. This condition is reflected in classrooms as a cultural difference. Therefore, the determination of the cultural sensitivity levels of teachers is considered important. This scale, developed in this context, is expected to contribute to upcoming studies. When the relevant literature is examined, it is observed that there is no scale to determine the cultural sensitivity of teachers, especially early childhood educators. Chen and Starosta (2000) developed the "Intercultural Sensitivity Scale," and this scale was applied to 414 college students. This scale aims to evaluate intercultural sensitivity, which is the emotional dimension of intercultural communication competence. The intercultural sensitivity scale includes 24 items and five sub-categories: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. The developed scale is used to identify the level of intercultural sensitivity of adults and does not contain items about the intercultural sensitivity level of early childhood educators in educational environments. "The Scale of Readiness for Culturally Responsive Education" was prepared by Karataş and Oral (2019) for pre-service teachers. This scale has been implemented for 231 preservice primary school teachers. The scale includes two sub-categories named "personal readiness" and "occupational readiness" and 21 items. This scale prepared for pre-service teachers is not appropriate for early childhood educators. The "Intercultural Understanding Instruments" were developed by Denson, Ovenden, Wright, Paradies, and Priest (2017) and include 16 items and four sub-dimensions for teachers from primary and secondary schools. These sub-dimensions are "culturally inclusive teaching strategies," "reflexivity," "adaptability/flexibility," and "openness to cultural diversity." "The Scale of Culturally Responsive Education for Teacher Views" comprised 26 items and two sub-categories listed as "sensitivity: possible contributions and concerns" (Kotluk, 2018). This scale is aimed at determining the perceptions of teachers about being culturally responsive. For the development of this scale, teachers from preschools, primary and secondary schools, and high schools participated, but the number of preschool teachers was the least. When these scales were examined, there was no instrument to determine the level of cultural sensitivity of preschool teachers. In addition, the items addressed to children coming from a different culture in the classroom environment should not be included in these scales. The scale that was developed for this research contains items about the attitudes of early childhood educators toward teaching foreign children. That way, the level of implementation of teachers' cultural sensitivity is examined.

In the current study, an instrument for the determination of the level of cultural sensitivity of early childhood educators was developed. The experimental form including 38 items was applied to 403 early childhood educators in pursuit of this goal. Experts' assessments were consulted for content validity, and EFA and CFA were done for the reliability and validity of the scale. The internal consistency coefficient was calculated based on the reliability of the study. The scale includes 29 items and three sub-dimensions after these analyses. These sub-categories are listed as 'the acceptance of cultural diversity- adaptation to cultural diversity and rejection of cultural diversity'. According to the results, it can be said that this instrument has adequate psychometric characteristics.

This study is limited by the development of a scale. It is recommended that this instrument be used in studies about the level of cultural sensitivity of preschool teachers. Moreover, correlational and descriptive research aimed at the examination of the relationship between the cultural sensitivity level of teachers and different variables. Also, this scale will be used as a data tool within the context of working with a different cultural education program for teachers. This scale developed by applying it to early childhood educators will be used for different sample groups, including teachers in diverse disciplines.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author was responsible for the conception and design of the study, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and preparation of the manuscript.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USE

No generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of the findings, or writing of this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

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