



## Cultural Sensitivity among University Students: Evidence from Jordan

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### Article Info

Received: May 26, 2025

Accepted: October 05, 2025

Published: October 22, 2025



10.46303/jcve.2025.30

### How to cite

El-Shara, I. A., Hatoq, N., Alabdallat, Z.,  
Helu, A. A., & Abu-Ghalyoun, O. (2025).

Cultural Sensitivity among University  
Students: Evidence from Jordan.

*Journal of Culture and Values in  
Education*, 8(3), 115-137.

<https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.2025.30>

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate how university students at the University of Jordan demonstrate cultural sensitivity. The researchers developed a 40-item Cultural Sensitivity Scale divided into three subdomains, using a five-point Likert scale. The validity and reliability of the scale were confirmed, and it was administered to a sample of 198 students. The findings revealed that the overall level of cultural sensitivity—particularly in the subdomains of respect for cultural differences and trust and attentiveness during interactions—was moderate. However, students displayed a high level of cultural sensitivity in the domain of engagement and enjoyment in interactions with others. The study highlights a moderate representation of cultural sensitivity among students at the University of Jordan, with particularly high engagement in interpersonal interactions. Recommendations include raising awareness and encouraging activities that promote respect for cultural differences and strengthen interpersonal communication among university students.

### KEYWORDS

Cultural sensitivity; The University of Jordan; university students;  
respect for others.

## INTRODUCTION

Human beings differ in characteristics, orientations, and appearances—diversity rooted in both social and biological necessity. This diversity serves essential purposes, such as fostering cooperation, peaceful coexistence, and mutual understanding; without these, societies risk descending into chaos and conflict. Thus, fostering a civilization that harmonizes diversity and coexistence is essential. An individual's culture is reflected in their values, attitudes, daily practices, social and political interactions, and knowledge, as well as in the ideas and beliefs they hold. Although many studies have examined cultural sensitivity and diversity, most have done so in broad or global contexts, often overlooking how these concepts are shaped within university teaching environments (Hall Lang et al., 2024; Markey et al., 2023; Kardas & Yilmaz Sahin, 2023). Prior research has emphasized general discussions of cultural sensitivity but has paid limited attention to how future teachers conceptualize it. This study aims to investigate how university students at the University of Jordan demonstrate cultural sensitivity by providing empirical evidence from authentic teaching contexts. In doing so, it contributes new insights into educational practice. The findings not only enrich the literature on cultural sensitivity but also offer practical implications for universities in designing programs that balance global standards with local realities. Cultural sensitivity is an acquired and evolving process, and its elements can be shaped and strengthened through university programs, activities, events, and educational materials (Al-Khaddam, 2023; Sithole-Tetani, 2025). In today's world, challenges such as globalization and technological convergence make cross-cultural understanding even more crucial. Promoting values of tolerance and respect is essential to address global challenges and build a peaceful future. Diversity is now a global principle. As expressed in the Johannesburg Summit Declaration, UNESCO's slogan *"Our diversity is the source of our strength"* affirms the organization's commitment to preserving cultural diversity as a driver of exchange, renewal, and creativity. Diversity enriches cultural interaction and reflects the multiplicity of identities within societies, encompassing differences in culture, language, religion, customs, and development (Al-Mutawa & Al-Marri, 2019).

The Quran promotes the concept of cultural diversity, advocating peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding as foundations for fulfilling humanity's purpose on earth. As stated in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13): *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."* This verse stresses that human value lies in piety rather than lineage, discouraging prejudice and upholding freedom of belief (Abdel Aziz, 2018). Cultural symbols such as language, knowledge, and religion are central to human identity, and social studies highlight human development through the understanding of these symbols (Al-Thawadi, 2006). In Jordan, cultural diversity strengthens both national identity and citizenship. The country has embraced diversity, particularly in response to waves of refugees from neighboring countries, who have brought varied cultural perspectives. Although Jordan has made considerable efforts to integrate

refugees—particularly through education and societal inclusion—continued initiatives are needed to support social cohesion (Amayra et al., 2018). Educational curricula are a key instrument for fostering unity and cultural understanding. They must adapt to globalization and transformation while preserving national identity and encouraging critical thinking, cooperation, and balanced cultural adaptation (Adam, 2006). Avoiding superficial categorization and promoting intercultural dialogue are essential to bridging differences and reducing conflict (Courtland, 2008).

School education in Jordan emphasizes civic values and social responsibility, equipping students with cultural and historical awareness to make informed decisions. This encourages pride in their heritage and supports the development of a strong national identity that promotes peaceful coexistence (Al Tamimi et al., 2020). University education also plays a critical role in shaping students' social values, loyalty, responsibility, and cooperative spirit (Al Ja'afra, 2015). The issue of coexistence has gained growing attention in the international community, particularly in the context of ongoing global conflicts and migration patterns (Tarman & Gürel, 2017). With the escalation of the Syrian and Palestinian crises, many families have sought refuge in Jordan, bringing social, economic, psychological, and political challenges. These circumstances require individuals to engage in intercultural interactions that demand patience, understanding, and effective communication (Almairy & Karasneh, 2018). In this context, universities have become pivotal social institutions, owing to their scientific, educational, and political roles in shaping future generations.

Cultural sensitivity refers to an individual's awareness of cultural experiences and differences within their society, combined with respect for other cultures while preserving each culture's uniqueness (Cushner, 1986). It influences emotional relationships among students and, when absent, can lead to negative feelings. Positive relationships are founded on respect and appreciation for differences (Honghao & Tianyu, 2021; Moody & Matthews, 2020). Understanding the level of cultural sensitivity among university students is particularly important for enhancing interactions with diverse cultural groups, improving academic success, and fostering effective communication (Okunishi & Tanaka, 2023). Jaber (2016) recommended offering training courses to promote a culture of diversity, while Altschuler, Sussman, and Kachur (2003) found that cultural training increased levels of cultural sensitivity. These findings suggest that university curricula should incorporate concepts such as dialogue, mutual understanding, and acceptance of diversity, especially in a globalized world where isolation within national borders is increasingly difficult. Meydanlioglu et al. (2015) also stressed the importance of enhancing language skills in university programs, while Thomas and Quinlan (2023) emphasized developing inclusive curricula that support minority students and bridge gaps between diverse groups. Accordingly, this study investigates the extent to which students at the University of Jordan demonstrate traits of cultural sensitivity. While building on previous research to shape its methodology and tools, it is distinct in focusing on students enrolled in the

first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of student representation in the School of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan with respect to cultural sensitivity criteria?
2. Are there statistically significant differences ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in students' mean scores on cultural sensitivity criteria based on academic level (undergraduate vs. postgraduate) and specialization?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ***Culture and society***

Culture refers to the integrated system of knowledge, ideas, habits, traditions, and values that distinguish one society from another (Tylor, 1871). It encompasses all aspects of life, shaping a society's identity and guiding its interactions with both the spiritual and material world. Culture also consists of practices acquired through knowledge and experience over time, which differentiate one society from another. It has several key characteristics: it transcends generations and nations, evolves rapidly through cognitive advances and cultural exchange, is human-centered, and is acquired through diverse experiences that meet individual needs (Sa'adeh & Ibrahim, 2020). Cultural content includes general aspects reflecting common life patterns—such as habits, values, language, religion, and traditions (Banks, 2006)—as well as specific practices and behaviors of smaller groups, including social classes, professional or economic categories, and artistic expressions. It may also incorporate new behavioral patterns introduced by individuals that gradually spread across groups, potentially developing into wider cultural norms if recognized for their significance (Hamdan, 1983; Sa'adeh & Ibrahim, 2020). Culture is often regarded as the other face of society, shaping individual personalities and reinforcing social unity (Oishi et al., 2021). It reflects ongoing interaction between individuals and groups to promote cohesion, understanding, and the fulfillment of human needs. A culture's structure is defined by its capacity to meet these needs, forming a system of norms and values that encourage cooperation and harmony. Thus, culture plays a vital role in driving social change and reflecting societal progress through both material and moral expressions (Al-Ashhab, 2013). While culture encompasses shared beliefs, values, and practices within a society, cultural sensitivity refers to how members perceive and engage with cultural differences in a respectful and disciplined manner, a concept discussed in the following section.

### ***Cultural Sensitivity and its development***

Due to the profound changes brought about by wars, migration, and demographic shifts, there is an increasing need for individuals to demonstrate cultural sensitivity by recognizing diversity and adapting to it. Such sensitivity helps prevent cultural clashes and supports balance and coexistence. In contexts of differing ideologies and diverse cultural backgrounds, cultural sensitivity entails understanding others' experiences and appreciating their values, thereby

enhancing intercultural communication and fostering positive attitudes towards cultural differences (Cortland, 2008).

Cultural sensitivity is fundamental to effective communication. When individuals are sensitive to other cultures, they communicate more effectively (Yüncü & Akgül, 2023). Intercultural competence arises from cultural awareness—an in-depth understanding of both one's own culture and that of others, combined with respect for diversity. It involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills that enable respectful and effective interaction (Al-Dakhil, 2021). Various models have been developed to examine cultural sensitivity across fields such as counselling, health care, and social services. One widely recognized framework is Bennett's (1989) model, which outlines six stages in the development of cultural sensitivity:

1. **Denial of difference** – individuals are unaware of cultural differences.
2. **Defense against difference** – one's own culture is viewed as superior.
3. **Minimization of difference** – cultural differences are **recognized** but downplayed.
4. **Acceptance of difference** – differences are acknowledged and valued.
5. **Adaptation to difference** – individuals adjust their **behavior** to communicate more effectively across cultures.
6. **Integration of differences** – individuals navigate and incorporate multiple cultural perspectives with ease while maintaining their identity.

A culturally sensitive individual typically demonstrates traits such as openness to other cultures, emotional self-regulation, adaptability, empathy, perspective-taking, flexibility in cross-cultural interactions, thoughtful judgment, and a reduced tendency towards egocentrism (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Cultural sensitivity is crucial for achieving global objectives, including peace, economic development, and international cooperation. It also yields social benefits such as empathy, friendship, conflict resolution, and stronger relationships through effective intercultural communication. Enhancing understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity fosters cultural competence—the ability to communicate and interact effectively across diverse cultural contexts (Al-Dakhil, 2021). Universities, as key social institutions, play a central role in fostering coexistence among diverse student populations in the context of contemporary societal transformations. They are responsible for preparing students to become culturally competent members of society. Through tailored curricula, universities seek to cultivate cultural appreciation and link education to heritage and civilization. Accordingly, academic programs across disciplines are designed to create inclusive environments that support coexistence (Abu Salah, 2020). The university phase serves as a transitional stage that prepares students for civic and professional life. In Jordan, university programs strengthen cultural identity through foundational courses such as Arabic language, Islamic culture, and national history, while also promoting global awareness through subjects such as English, information technology, geography, and archaeology. Fields such as journalism, political science, and sociology further

reinforce national belonging, deepen students' understanding of their culture and history, and encourage respect for other cultures (Atoum & Obaidat, 2013).

Efforts to strengthen cultural identity are reflected in the inclusion of mandatory undergraduate courses such as National Education, which familiarize students with their cultural and national heritage. These courses promote engagement with national events and issues through seminars, religious and cultural celebrations, and discussions that foster cultural awareness and civic responsibility. Such activities have enhanced students' cultural sensitivity and deepened their understanding of national and contemporary challenges (Al-Shuwaihat & Nasser, 2003). Abu Hashish (2010) underscored the central role of faculties of education in promoting values such as tolerance, freedom of expression, cooperation, patriotism, self-confidence, and individual rights. These institutions contribute to societal development by encouraging dialogue, openness, objective judgment, and engagement with national institutions. They also foster innovation and scientific research, equipping students with the skills to contribute meaningfully to society (Atoum & Obaidat, 2013).

### ***Cultural sensitivity among university students***

Researchers have examined several studies related to cultural sensitivity. Meydanlioglu et al. (2015) investigated levels of cultural sensitivity among health students at Akdeniz University in Antalya. Using a descriptive approach, the study randomly selected 275 students from the Colleges of Medicine and Nursing. The findings showed that students in these fields demonstrated good levels of cultural sensitivity, with those who interacted with other cultures and spoke a foreign language displaying even higher sensitivity. Thomas and Quinlan (2023) explored the impact of incorporating cultural sensitivity into curricula on the participation of minority students in the UK. Their descriptive study included 265 ethnically diverse students enrolled in arts, humanities, and social sciences. Results indicated that ethnic minority students viewed their curricula as culturally inappropriate, which contributed to lower engagement with instructors and reduced interest in the curriculum compared to white students.

Field (1990) examined the effect of multicultural counseling training on the cultural sensitivity of graduate students in the United States. Using an experimental design with a sample of 25 students from the Counseling Department at Indiana State University, the study found statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level in favor of the experimental group, indicating that multicultural training enhanced cultural sensitivity. Jaber (2016) investigated the concept of cultural sensitivity among female educational counselors in Iraq using a descriptive approach. The sample comprised 200 female counselors employed in schools under the Iraqi Ministry of Education (excluding the Kurdistan region), selected through stratified random sampling. The results showed no statistically significant differences based on academic specialization, but significant differences emerged by years of experience, with those having 8–14 years scoring higher in cultural sensitivity. Espino et al. (2020) analyzed college student discourse in a cross-cultural digital makerspace. They found that U.S., Kenyan, and Finnish students expressed global citizenship in culturally distinct ways, highlighting differences in

collaboration, reflection, and communication. Altschuler et al. (2003) assessed changes in cultural sensitivity among medical trainees in the United States. Employing an experimental approach with a purposive sample of 26 second-year pediatric trainees at Maimonides Medical Center, the study found low levels of denial and defense, high levels of acceptance, cognitive and behavioral adaptation, and a moderate level of unawareness, concluding that cultural training improved cultural sensitivity. Similarly, Chen and Starosta (2000) evaluated the cultural sensitivity of foreign language students in the United States using a descriptive method with a random sample of 220 students at the University of Rhode Island. Findings indicated above-average cultural sensitivity, particularly in respect for differences. The dimensions of cultural sensitivity were ranked as valuing culture, engaging in interaction, paying attention, and enjoyment. Statistically significant gender-based differences were found in respect dimensions, although no significant differences appeared between students with or without international experience.

Differences in the trust dimension were observed across academic specializations, attributed to variations in interaction patterns. Majumdar et al. (2004) evaluated the effectiveness of cultural sensitivity training on healthcare providers' knowledge and attitudes, as well as its impact on patient satisfaction and health outcomes across diverse ethnic groups. Using an experimental design, a random sample of 247 healthcare providers was selected. Findings showed that training improved openness, cultural awareness, understanding of diversity, and communication with minority patients. One year later, patients of European and British descent who received care from trained providers demonstrated better use of social resources and functional abilities, without increased healthcare costs. In a related study, Al-Mahafzah (2015) investigated Jordanian university students' awareness of citizenship. Using a descriptive approach, a purposive sample of 800 students from eight Jordanian universities, spanning first- to fourth-year levels, was selected. Results revealed statistically significant differences favoring male students, those from higher-income families, humanities students, and fourth-year students in the dimension of pluralism and acceptance of others. Collectively, these studies have examined cultural sensitivity levels among university students, particularly in medicine, counseling, and foreign languages (Altschuler et al., 2003; Chen & Starosta, 2000). They have also explored the integration of cultural sensitivity into curricula and its effect on minority student engagement (Thomas & Quinlan, 2023), while further research has highlighted the role of multicultural training programs in enhancing cultural sensitivity among students and professionals in various fields (Field, 1990; Majumdar et al., 2004).

## METHODOLOGY

### *Study design*

This study employed a descriptive design (Creswell, 2018), appropriate for describing phenomena in their natural setting and examining relationships between variables. Consistent with this approach, the study relied on quantitative data collected from university students

using a developed and validated scale to measure their levels of cultural sensitivity. This method enabled the analysis of students' responses, the identification of patterns, and the examination of the effects of demographic variables—academic level and specialization— on cultural sensitivity scores.

### ***Study sample***

An online questionnaire link (explained in later sections) was distributed to faculty members teaching courses in the Classroom Teacher and Guidance and Special Education undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the University of Jordan's School of Educational Sciences during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year via a private WhatsApp group. Convenience sampling was employed, as faculty members were asked to share the link with their students, enabling easy access to participants who were readily available and willing to respond. A total of 198 students completed the questionnaire, forming the study sample. Of these, 172 were undergraduates and 26 were postgraduates. Among the undergraduates, 115 majored in Classroom Teacher and 83 in Guidance and Special Education. The sample of 198 participants was considered sufficient for quantitative data analysis. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) reported that a sample size of about 200 from a population of several thousand is adequate with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Creswell (2018) similarly noted that samples exceeding 100 participants are suitable for effective descriptive and correlational studies. Accordingly, the sample size in this study meets recommended standards for validity and reliability in educational research.

### ***Instrument of the study***

To develop the instrument, the authors reviewed educational literature and previous studies on cultural sensitivity to identify aspects of the concept included in earlier research tools. An initial version of the scale was drafted with 45 items across three domains: (1) engagement and enjoyment in interacting with others, (2) respect for cultural differences, and (3) confidence and attention during interaction. Following expert review and pilot testing, the final version comprised 36 items divided into three dimensions. The instrument's items are reported in the tables within the Findings and Discussion section. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Fourteen negatively worded items (Items 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 32, 35, 39) were reverse-coded. Face validity was established by presenting the initial 45-item version to six experts in curriculum, teaching, and educational psychology from Jordanian universities. They assessed item clarity, linguistic accuracy, and domain relevance. Based on their feedback, several items were revised and five redundant items were removed, producing a 40-item version. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency. The revised instrument was piloted with 30 students outside the main study sample. Four items were eliminated due to low or negative reliability coefficients, resulting in a final version of 36 items. Table 1 presents the reliability coefficients for each domain and the overall scale.

**Table 1.***Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Subdomains*

Subdomains	Number of Items	Cronbach's Coefficients	Alpha
Engagement and enjoyment of interactions with others	12	0.77	
Respect for cultural differences	10	0.79	
Trust and attention during interaction with others	8	0.75	
Total	40	0.90	

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To address the research questions in this study, means and standard deviations were calculated for participants' ratings of cultural sensitivity. A two-way ANOVA was also conducted to examine the significance of mean differences, thereby addressing the second question. Students rated their perceptions across the cultural sensitivity domains using the Likert-type scale questionnaire, and mean scores were calculated for each domain, with higher means indicating stronger representation of that dimension. For interpretation, results were categorized into three levels—high, moderate, and low—by dividing the overall range into three equal intervals.

In response to the first research question, "What is the level of representation of University of Jordan students for cultural sensitivity criteria?", the means and standard deviations of participants' ratings across the three cultural sensitivity domains, as well as the overall rating, were calculated, as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*Means and Standard Deviations of the Level of Student Representation in the School of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan Concerning Three Domains of Cultural Sensitivity Criteria*

Domain	Means	SD	Degree
Engagement and enjoyment of interactions with others	3.75	0.54	High
Respecting cultural differences	3.61	0.59	Moderate
Trust and attention during interaction with others	3.48	0.44	Moderate
Overall	3.61	0.41	Moderate

It is evident from Table 2 that the overall domain received an average rating of 3.61 with a standard deviation of 0.41. The subdomain *engagement and enjoyment in interacting with others* achieved the highest average rating of 3.75 with a standard deviation of 0.54, indicating

a high level of satisfaction. This finding aligns with Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which identifies relatedness as a fundamental psychological need that enhances motivation and well-being through social connection. The domain *respecting cultural differences* ranked second, with an average rating of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 0.59, reflecting a moderate level. The domain *trust and attentiveness during interaction with others* ranked lowest, with an average of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.44, also indicating a moderate level. Morse and Field (1995) emphasized that trust and attentiveness are vital components of effective communication and qualitative inquiry, particularly in health and education contexts.

These results differ from those of Meydanlioglu et al. (2015) and Thomas and Quinlan (2023), who reported high levels of students' cultural sensitivity. Meydanlioglu et al. (2015) found that students in culturally diverse and emotionally supportive environments reported greater satisfaction and interpersonal engagement, underscoring the importance of social-emotional dynamics in education. However, the findings are consistent with Chen and Starosta (2000) in relation to enjoyment and participation. This outcome may reflect students' interaction with diverse cultures at the university, which provided opportunities to learn dialogue techniques and develop skills for navigating cultural diversity. It may also be attributed to students' positive experiences, which enhanced their confidence in engaging with others, respecting differences, recognizing their own worth, and strengthening their self-confidence and abilities. In addition, direct interaction with individuals from different cultural backgrounds offered opportunities for knowledge exchange and enriched experiences. The nature of university activities and program content may likewise have contributed to promoting respect for others through events that foster communication and intercultural interaction.

Data analysis was then advanced by calculating the means and standard deviations of students' ratings for the items within each of the three domains. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for students' responses in the *Engagement and enjoyment in interacting with others* domain, arranged in descending order.

The table shows that out of 12 items, 9 received high ratings and 3 moderate ratings, indicating that participating students are generally open, collaborative, and enjoy cross-cultural interactions. The item *"If someone diminishes my culture, I feel humiliated and shattered"* received the highest rating, with a mean of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 0.95. The item *"I feel annoyed when dealing with people from other cultures"* ranked second with a mean of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 1.07. The item *"I try to be open to people from other cultures"* also ranked second with a mean of 3.38 and a standard deviation of 0.97. The item *"I avoid situations involving people of different cultures from mine"* ranked lowest, with a mean of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 1.03. Overall, the scale achieved a high average of 3.75 with a standard deviation of 0.54.

**Table 3.**

*Standard Deviations of Students' Ratings within the Domain of Engagement and Enjoyment of Interactions with Others*

<b>Engagement and enjoyment of interactions with others</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Degree</b>
If someone diminishes my culture, I feel humiliated and shattered	4.06	0.95	High
I feel annoyed when dealing with people from different cultures	4.01	1.07	High
I often feel unproductive when interacting with people from different cultures	3.90	1.05	High
I feel frustrated when I am with people from different cultures	3.89	1.04	High
I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures	3.86	1.00	High
I do not form negative impressions about others who are culturally different from me	3.82	0.94	High
I use signals and body language to express my understanding of others from different cultures	3.79	0.87	High
I make an effort to get to know people who are culturally different from me and collaborate with them	3.71	0.98	High
I interact positively with people who are culturally different from me	3.68	0.92	High
I am sociable when interacting with people from different cultures	3.65	0.99	Moderate
I try to be open to people from other cultures	3.38	0.97	Moderate
I avoid situations that involve people who are culturally different from me	3.20	1.03	Moderate
Overall	3.75	0.54	High

This may be because students felt accepted by others during their interactions, which increased their willingness to engage in different forms of communication and was reflected in their enjoyment of interacting with people from various cultures. It could also be attributed to students avoiding controversial topics, leading conversations to focus on areas of agreement. This created an agreeable dialogue, free from conflict and characterized by enjoyment and acceptance. At the same time, avoiding interaction with individuals from different cultures may have limited opportunities for mutual enjoyment through dialogue, possibly explaining students' preference for spending time with people from their own culture. Negative feelings when someone belittles their culture may also heighten sensitivity towards cultural differences and encourage respect during interactions, making dialogue more affectionate and enjoyable.

The means and standard deviations of students' ratings within the items of the *Respect for cultural diversity* domain were also calculated and arranged in descending order, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Means and Standard Deviations for Students' Ratings within the Field of Respect for Cultural Diversity.*

<b>Respect for cultural diversity</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Degree</b>
I respect the values of people from other cultures.	4.30	0.81	High
I view people from different cultures as inferior to me.	4.29	1.03	High
I respect the behaviors and ways of people from other cultures.	4.08	0.9	High
I do not accept the opinions and ideas of people from other cultures.	3.95	1.09	High
Usually, I see the opinions of others as not helpful.	3.83	1.07	High
I prefer not to be around people from other cultures.	3.72	1.16	High
I prefer to grow up and live in a culture other than my own.	3.66	1.24	Moderate
I believe that my culture is better than other cultures.	3.02	1.13	Moderate
I feel proud when I see my culture as superior to other cultures.	1.62	0.78	Low
Overall.	3.61	0.59	Moderate

As shown in Table 4, six items received high ratings, two moderate ratings, and one a low rating. The item *"I respect the values of people from other cultures"* ranked first with a high mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.81, while the item *"I view people from cultures other than mine as inferior"* ranked second with a high mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 1.03. The item *"I believe that my culture is better than other cultures"* ranked second to last with a mean of 3.02 and a standard deviation of 1.13. The item *"I feel proud when I see my culture as superior to other cultures"* ranked last with a low mean of 1.62 and a standard deviation of 0.78. The overall domain mean was 3.61 with a standard deviation of 0.59. This outcome may reflect students' attachment to their cultural identity and their mistrust of other cultures, shaped by factors that foster discrimination, racism, and beliefs in cultural superiority. Research across varied contexts has shown that intercultural sensitivity among university students is enhanced through multicultural experiences, demographic awareness, and intentional educational strategies. In Turkey, sensitivity was strengthened by interactions with diverse peers, exchange programs, and language skills (Korkmaz-Aslan, 2019). Kardas and Yilmaz Sahin (2023) reported that higher sensitivity was associated with greater effectiveness in intercultural interactions among nursing students.

Some people respect the actions of those who are culturally different because they embrace positive values that promote peaceful coexistence and engage in sports, social,

voluntary, and cultural activities that strengthen their interactions with the community. Others prefer to live within a different culture to experience new challenges that help them discover themselves and their interests. Meydanlioglu et al. (2015) recommended creating opportunities for students abroad to enhance their cultural sensitivity.

The low rating of the item *“I feel proud when I see my culture as superior to other cultures”* may be linked to students’ difficulty in distinguishing their own culture from others. This aligns with the item *“I believe that my culture is better than other cultures,”* which received an average rating. A student lacking cultural sensitivity may be biased towards their own culture, not by rejecting its positive aspects but by prioritizing respect for other cultures.

The means and standard deviations of students’ ratings for the items in the *Trust and attention during interaction with others* domain were also calculated and arranged in descending order, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

*Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Ratings Within the Domain of Trust and Attention During Interaction with Others*

<b>Trust and attention during interaction with others</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Degree</b>
I adhere to the boundaries of etiquette when dealing with people from other cultures	4.35	0.85	High
I take pride in myself when interacting with people from other cultures	4.08	0.85	High
I feel confident when interacting with people from other cultures	3.74	0.87	High
I am ready to practice the values of my national culture	3.74	0.94	High
I always know what to say when interacting with people from other cultures	3.45	0.9	Moderate
I find it difficult when speaking in front of people from other cultures	3.20	0.91	Moderate
I feel sad and anxious when I distance myself from my own national culture	3.16	1.11	Moderate
I fear for my national culture when interacting with people from other cultures	2.15	0.92	Low
Overall	3.48	0.44	Moderate

The table shows that four items received high scores, three received moderate scores, and one received a low score. The item *“I adhere to the boundaries of etiquette when interacting with people from other cultures”* received the highest score, with a mean of 4.35 and a standard deviation of 0.85. The item *“I take pride in myself when interacting with people from other cultures”* ranked second, with a mean of 4.08 and a standard deviation of 0.85. By contrast, the

item *“I feel sad and anxious when I distance myself from my own national culture”* ranked second to last, with a mean of 3.16 and a standard deviation of 1.11. Finally, the item *“I fear for my national culture when interacting with people from other cultures”* ranked last, with a low mean of 2.15 and a standard deviation of 0.92. The overall domain mean was 3.48 with a standard deviation of 0.44. The average score in the area of trust and attention during interaction may be attributed to students’ limited familiarity with the elements and components of other cultures, possibly due to restricted interaction with culturally diverse peers. It is common for students, particularly in their early years, to associate mainly with peers from similar social or school backgrounds. Their reluctance to engage in activities beyond academic requirements or in non-assessed activities may also limit exposure to other cultures. This is reflected in low participation in seminars and workshops, with most engagement confined to community service activities. The item *“I am willing to practice the values of my national culture”* reflects students’ readiness to uphold the principles of their own cultural identity.

In addressing the second research question, *“Are there any significant differences ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the mean scores of student representation in the School of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan concerning cultural sensitivity criteria based on academic level (undergraduate vs. postgraduate) and specialization?”*, means and standard deviations were calculated by academic level and specialization (see Table 6) and further analyzed using a two-way analysis of variance (2-way ANOVA) (see Table 7) to determine significant differences.

**Table 6.**

*Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Estimates of Cultural Sensitivity Criteria*

Variable	Level	Mean	SD
Academic level	Bachelor's degree	3.60	0.42
	Postgraduate studies	3.66	0.36
Specialization	Classroom Teacher	3.60	0.41
	Guidance and Special Education	3.66	0.4

Table 6 shows differences in the mean estimates of university students’ cultural sensitivity criteria based on the two variables considered. To determine the significance of these differences, a pairwise analysis of variance was conducted, as presented in Table 7.

As Table 7 shows, there are no statistically significant differences at the ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) level in students' representation of cultural sensitivity criteria attributed to academic level and major at the bachelor’s level. The F-values were 0.82 and 0.98, with corresponding significance levels of 0.37 and 0.33, respectively.

**Table 7.***Two-way ANOVA Analysis to Test Cultural Sensitivity Representation*

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f	Sig.
Among the groups	1897.20	1	1897.20	11503.51	0.00
Academic level	0.14	1	0.14	0.82	0.37
Bachelor's degree major	0.16	1	0.16	0.98	0.33
Error	32.16	195	0.17		
Total	2616.86	198			
Adjusted error	32.54	197			

This result aligns with Jaber (2016), who found no differences attributable to academic major, but contradicts Chen and Starosta (2000), who reported differences based on academic specialization. A possible explanation lies in students' cultural awareness, developed through interactions with peers from diverse ethnicities and backgrounds. The University of Jordan enrolls non-Jordanian students from over 80 Arab and foreign nationalities, enriching student experiences in intercultural dialogue and engagement, and enhancing their communication skills. Participation in multicultural activities, university events, and collaborative course projects may also have contributed to students' embodiment of cultural sensitivity criteria. This finding is further supported by Majumdar et al. (2004), who showed that frequent and ongoing interaction with individuals from diverse cultures enhances cultural sensitivity.

Furthermore, the integration of core university courses that reflect global trends and expose students to both their own culture and those of others may also play a role. The inclusion of foreign language courses allows students to express themselves and communicate more effectively with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, fostering an appreciation of different perspectives. In addition, family upbringing during early childhood may contribute to instilling values of peaceful coexistence and rejecting racism and intolerance. Table 8 (see Appendix) presents the means and standard deviations of students' responses across the variables of academic level and major at the bachelor's level.

**Table 9.***Hotelling's Trace Values for the Variables of Academic Level and Bachelor's Major*

Hotelling's Trace	Value	F	df	Sig.
Academic level	0.02	1.31	3.0	0.27
Specialization	0.01	0.92	3.0	0.43

It is evident from Table 8 that there are noticeable differences within the subdomains of cultural sensitivity criteria based on the variables of academic level and specialization. To determine the significance of these differences, Hotelling's Trace test was applied to the subdomains of cultural sensitivity, taking into account academic level and specialization. The results are shown in Table 9.

It is clear from Table 9 that there are no statistically significant differences at the ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) level in any of the subdomains attributable to academic level or bachelor's specialization. This indicates that cultural sensitivity criteria are not necessarily influenced by a specific academic discipline or level. These results align with recent studies suggesting that cultural sensitivity is not directly linked to a student's academic field or stage of study. For instance, a survey of Filipino college students reported no significant differences in sociocultural sensitivity across disciplines (International Journal of Academic and Applied Education [IJAE], 2023). Similarly, research on culturally sensitive curricula in higher education has shown that neither the university context nor the course of study significantly affects students' overall cultural sensitivity (Zawadzka & Czerniejewska, 2023). In addition, a study of theology students in Turkey found that academic grade level was not a determining factor in intercultural sensitivity, indicating that students' attitudes towards cultural diversity do not change automatically as they advance through university (Kirman, 2020).

Cultural sensitivity criteria may be more closely related to individual personality traits and awareness of effective communication and interaction skills. The results suggest that life experiences and participation in diverse social activities may influence cultural sensitivity more strongly than academic field or level. Based on the analytical insights presented above, this study recommends enriching academic programs with activities that raise students' awareness of the importance of respecting cultural differences, incorporating content on cultural diversity into university curricula, and exploring students' attitudes towards it. It further encourages fostering and strengthening positive interactions among students from different cultural backgrounds. The study also proposes conducting similar research at pre-university levels to better understand the development of early cultural sensitivity.

The significance of this study lies in its dual contributions to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it provides a comprehensive framework that explains the foundations of cultural sensitivity, addresses a knowledge gap in the field, and reviews relevant literature and previous studies. Practically, it clarifies the criteria of cultural sensitivity and assesses how well students embody these principles. This understanding supports the development of cultural diversity, mutual respect, and acceptance of others within university settings. The findings may also assist educational and psychological counselors in designing programs and activities that promote cultural sensitivity and improve students' social awareness and communication skills, thereby fostering a safer and more respectful university environment grounded in constructive dialogue. Furthermore, the study may inspire future research into variables associated with cultural sensitivity and inform the development of culturally responsive counseling programs and educational policies. The study was limited to students in the School of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan during the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. Generalizability is constrained by reliance on the validity and reliability of the study instrument and on the objectivity of participants' responses to the scale.

## CONCLUSION

Cultural sensitivity is a vital factor in promoting citizenship, ensuring security, and fostering social peace, guaranteeing that no group dominates another and that everyone's rights are respected. A culturally sensitive student is better equipped to communicate efficiently and effectively with others, with competence rooted in a deep understanding of cultural diversity and a respectful appreciation of differences. Promoting cultural sensitivity among university students is therefore essential through the enhancement of academic programs and extracurricular activities that encourage active participation, cooperation, volunteering, and peaceful coexistence. The results of this study showed that students' overall perception of cultural sensitivity was average, as were their perceptions of respect for cultural differences, confidence, and interest in engaging with others. However, the participants demonstrated a high level of cultural sensitivity in their interactions and enjoyment of engaging with others. The findings also indicated no statistically significant differences in students' perceptions of cultural sensitivity based on educational level (bachelor's or postgraduate) or undergraduate major. This may be due to the nature of university programs, which either lack emphasis on cultural sensitivity or influence students across majors and academic levels in similar ways. Based on these results, this study encourages those responsible for developing university programs to intensify efforts by incorporating courses that integrate the principles of cultural diversity as a key factor in strengthening community safety.

Future studies could examine the impact of targeted educational programs—such as intercultural dialogue and communication training—on enhancing students' respect for cultural differences. They could also explore the relationship between cultural sensitivity and variables like academic major, gender, and international experience, with the aim of developing more inclusive and culturally responsive policies in Jordanian universities. In addition, comparative studies between Jordanian and international (foreign) students could offer deeper insights into how different cultural backgrounds influence the development and expression of cultural sensitivity within higher education settings.

### **Declaration of conflicting interests**

The author(s) declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Students participated voluntarily in completing the scale, and their names and identities were not disclosed, ensuring anonymity.

### **Declaration of AI Use**

Language refinement and translation assistance for this manuscript were supported by Microsoft Copilot, an AI companion. No AI-generated content was used in the development of original knowledge, analysis, or conceptual contributions.

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**APPENDIX**

**Table 8.**

*Means and Standard Deviations Across the Variables of Academic Level and Major at the Bachelor’s Level*

Domain	Program	Specialization	Means	SD	
Engagement and enjoying interacting with others.	Bachelor's degree	Classroom Teacher	3.73	0.52	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.73	0.59	
		Total	3.73	0.55	
	Postgraduate studies	Classroom Teacher	3.75	0.53	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.82	0.51	
		Total	3.8	0.51	
	Total	Classroom Teacher	3.73	0.52	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.76	0.56	
		Total	3.75	0.54	
			Classroom Teacher	3.47	0.59

Respecting cultural differences.	Bachelor's degree	Classroom Teacher	3.66	0.56	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.56	0.58	
		Total	3.82	0.63	
		Postgraduate studies	Classroom Teacher	3.73	0.59
			Guidance and Special Education	3.76	0.6
			Total	3.53	0.61
	Total	Classroom Teacher	3.68	0.57	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.61	0.59	
		Total	3.48	0.45	
		Bachelor's degree	Classroom Teacher	3.51	0.44
			Guidance and Special Education	3.49	0.44
			Total	3.42	0.44
Postgraduate studies	Classroom Teacher	3.47	0.42		
	Guidance and Special Education	3.45	0.42		
	Total	3.47	0.44		
	Total	Classroom Teacher	3.5	0.43	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.48	0.44	
		Total	3.73	0.52	
Total	Bachelor's degree	Classroom Teacher	3.73	0.59	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.73	0.55	
		Total	3.75	0.53	
	Postgraduate studies	Classroom Teacher	3.82	0.51	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.8	0.51	
		Total	3.73	0.52	
Total	Total	Classroom Teacher	3.76	0.56	
		Guidance and Special Education	3.75	0.54	
		Total			