An evaluation of undergraduate public administration programs at Turkish Universities: Reviewing the literature and proposing a model of cultural competence development

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to identify the main predictors of cultural competence (CC). In the study, the cultural competence of the public administration students was analyzed. A total of 599 public administration students from twenty public and two foundation universities in eighteen different provinces of Turkey responded to a survey. The questionnaire survey was derived from a literature review; validated by exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The study proposes a CC evaluation model with five principal attributes: political awareness, civic action, belief in collective action, social justice attitudes, and ethical leadership. Accordingly, the model included 29 items that address all aspects of cultural competence. The model can be used to evaluate the CC level of public administration students. Besides, this model can also be applied in public organizations to evaluate their responsiveness to the public. Because public institutions today are supposed to be responsive to the cultural needs of citizens.

1. Introduction

Public administrators are stewards of democracy and charged with addressing the needs of different groups and people in their implementation of public policy. Hence, they must develop competencies to find a way in order to effectively interact and serve different individuals (Blessett, 2018; Edlins & Dolamore, 2018; Hergüner, 2019a).

With the changing demographics in many countries due to the high inflow of immigrants, the topic of cultural competence has increased in importance and sets the necessary foundation for future public managers working in increasingly diverse citizenry (Carrizales, 2010; Haupt & Knox, 2018; Rice, 2007; White & Rice, 2010).

In recent years, Turkey witnessed a skyrocketing influx of immigrants from Syria and other war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, in addition to a rising number of expats from European countries in coastal towns and cities. As a result, the delivery of culturally responsive public programs and public services has become more important in the country. Hence, this study examines the antecedents of cultural competence (CC hereafter) of public administration students, who are expected to take on essential tasks in the future, and aims at developing a model.

The article begins by reviewing the literature on the change and the increasing importance of cultural competence in the public administration. Then, the research model of the current study is presented and an explanation of the strategies used to test the model follows. Lastly, the article concludes with a discussion of the findings and their implications for the field.

1.1. Understanding the change in public administration

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the emergence of 'New Public Management' (NPM), the main idea of which was to take inspiration from the private sector to make possible economic growth. To achieve this purpose, reforms promoting decentralization of power aimed at creating more business-like entities to increase competitiveness among organizations (Barzeley, 1992; Hood, 1991; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). So, growing interest in "managerialism" became the fashion to follow. It was a consequence of public reforms conducted in the spirit of NPM, which was aiming at introducing less hierarchy, more contract provision of public services in a logic of competitiveness, private-public-partnership, delegating responsibility to the local level, and shifting the emphasis from process to performance management. Nevertheless, the NPM faced powerful critics (Hergüner, 2015; Manning, 2001; Nemec, 2010; Noordhoek & Saner, 2005; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004) and some countries are again on the way to centralize some major

public services.

In line with this, the term "public value" was coined by Moore (1995). In his seminal book entitled "Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government", he argued that public servants have long been encouraged to implement policies without questioning what those policies should aim to achieve. Therefore, they failed to provide as much value to the public as they could do otherwise. He also maintained that NPM did not satisfactorily justify the differences between the private and public sectors. For him, the aim of managerial work in the public sector should be to create public value.

In later academic works, the public value was proposed in different ways such as a 'rediscovery of government' by Smith (2004), "replacement of the NPM approach to public sector reform" by Benington (2011) or "public value governance" by Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2014). However, all of these perspectives have common ground that previous models of public sector organization-i.e. NPM models-have neglected civil society and positioned the public as mere consumers. Hence, the public value idea puts emphasis on the legitimacy of public institutions unlike the emphasis on efficiency in NPM (Talbot & Wiggan, 2010). Accordingly, co-production and public involvement have become crucial in public institutions (Bovaird, 2007; Keaney, 2006).

Briefly, the new movement is a response to the shortcomings of NPM and prioritizes values beyond efficiency and effectiveness. It focuses on democratic values and participative democracy. Public value connotes an active sense of adding value, rather than a passive sense of safeguarding interests (Alford & O'Flynn, 2009). However, the conflicts between values represent a key topic in public value research (Andersen et al., 2013). Furthermore, the public value framework poses several problems as there is no agreement about what creates value for the public. Because, the public may have difficulty determining merit goods, the value of which may only be known in retrospect. Thus, there is still a need for public managers' expertise to mediate between opposite views of what creates public value (Alford & O'Flynn, 2008; Keaney, 2006) and a public sector leader who is supposed to increase public value should have critical competencies such as cultural curiosity, cross-cultural competency, cultural agility and cultural humility (Davis, 2018).

In view of that, the following section identifies different cultural dimensions and clarifies the expected attitudes of public servants vìs-a-vìs cultural issues.

1.2. Culture, cultural differences and cultural competence

For Betancourt (2004, s. 953), culture is a pattern of learned beliefs, values, and behavior that are shared within a group; it includes language, styles of communication, practices, customs, and views on roles and relationships; and it shapes the way we approach our World. Every single individual belongs to more than one culture, which may be social, professional, or religious. Besides, culture shapes personal, family, and group values, attitudes, and perceptions about what works and what does not in coping with problems (Rice, 2007: 624–625). For example, devout Christians generally oppose abortion, whereas many liberals support it. Both Christians and liberals believe that human life is sacred and that murder is a heinous crime, but they disagree about specific biological facts: does human life begin at the moment of conception, at the moment of birth or at some middle point? Indeed, some human cultures maintain that life does not begin even at birth. According to various groups in the Arctic and Kalahari desert, human life begins after the person is given a name (Harari, 2015, s. 189).

This example indicates the significance of cultural competency and competence, which are interrelated and have similar meanings. Thus, their meanings and the contexts in which they are used should be first clarified to prevent confusion.

Schultz (2016) maintains that arguments concerning cultural competency generally seem rooted in the United States. However, for him, there is also a global aspect to this. Cultural competency is the

integration of awareness, sensitivity, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and encounters by individuals in programs and services to acknowledge and respect the cultural traditions of their clients and their communities (Rice, 2008). It can improve public administration/public service delivery normative values by enhancing an agency's ability to work efficiently, effectively, and equitably in the context of cultural differences (Rice, 2007: 622). On the other hand, cultural competence is simply about preparing current and future public managers with the skills and competencies to effectively deal with a diverse citizenry (Cram & Alkadry, 2018: 519).

"Cultural competence is an important prerequisite for administrators' ability to relate to their clients, customers, or service recipients. This ability is simply critical for the effectiveness of administrators" (Cram & Alkadry, 2018: 522). Therefore, the programs of public administration and public policy are pivotal in helping students learn about and manifest such a public service perspective (Blessett, 2018; Rice, 2007). Accordingly, public administration students need to acquire interpersonal and intrapersonal skills along with cognitive knowledge in those programs (Denhardt, 2001).

As used in the current study, cultural competence refers to "the capability not only to understand one's own culture, but also to understand and respond sensitively to the differing cultures of the other people" (Swan, French, & Norman-Major, 2012: 141). Briefly, cultural competence is understanding and respecting different ethnic and cultural systems (Bush, 2000; 177), and being competent in cross-cultural situations is to learn new patterns of behavior and to apply them effectively in appropriate settings (Rice, 2007: 624–625).

Accordingly, a culturally competent public manager is first supposed to acknowledge a lack of knowledge about other cultures and therefore, (s)he is committed to learning about them. Second, a culturally competent professional appreciates diversity and is sensitive to the differences between cultures. Third, a competent professional must be self-aware and recognize the influence of his or her culture. Fourth, a competent public manager communicates effectively with a diverse citizenry and workforce and adapt services to meet their needs. Finally, a culturally competent public manager makes use of the cultural knowledge (s)he has gained and adapts his/her practice behaviors to meet the needs of the people (s)he is serving (Carrizales, 2010; Cram & Alkadry, 2018: 525; Rice, 2007).

In consequence, the question of an ideal public servant quality should be re-evaluated in the changing context of public administration practices. Therefore, the next section discusses the significance of cultural competence in public administration practice and education today.

1.3. The significance of cultural competence in public administration practice and education

The public administration discipline has a challenging dual mission of educating academicians and practitioners since the beginning. Normative issues such as social equity, ethical behavior and the impact of diversity on public institutions and policies are issues that conjoin public administration scholarship and practice. Nonetheless, although most practitioners recognize the importance of diversity in the workplace, cultural competence or themes related to diversity are not standard in the public administration education curriculum (Hewins-Maroney & Williams, 2007; Lopez-Littleton & Blessett, 2015, s. 557). Moreover, the internationalization of public administration education has given rise to questions about whether western perspectives, courses, and competencies are fitting for the non-western contexts (Haase, Haddad, & El-Badri, 2018).

The notion of incorporating cultural competency into the higher education curriculum is not something new and some programs in health institutions have practiced teaching cultural competency for the past three decades (Carrizales, 2010: 595). However, educating Masters of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Public Policy (MPP) or undergraduate public administration students to be culturally competent

has just recently become a regular part of public affairs education (Jensen & Butz, 2018).

Ryan (2012) argues that leading scholars in the US have called for a greater emphasis on diversity in public affairs programs since the late 1960s. However, the formal integration into the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) standards occurred relatively recently (Jensen & Butz, 2018).

According to Hewins-Maroney and Williams (2007, s. 36), the lack of engaged thought about diversity is a great void because the public administration education's fundamental objective is to prepare students for leadership roles in public service. They further maintain that if the public administration students' education is lacking in cultural competency and diversity issues, then they cannot deliver responsive public service.

Finally, in the traditional public administration, cultural issues conflict with the equality and neutrality principles. Accordingly, all the citizens should be approached in the same manner by the public servants, and they should get the same public services regardless of their cultural identity. Nonetheless, understanding the cultural context prevents public servants from being biased and stereotypical (Rice, 2007). Table 1 gives a comparison of the features of traditional public administration and responsive governance. In line with the responsive governance approach, public administration students and practitioners today should prove their capability to understand their stakeholders' different needs. In brief, they should be responsive to the various needs of the people they serve. Hence, they should have cultural competence, whether they are planning or evaluating a program.

2. Research model and hypotheses

Fig. 1 represents the research model guiding the inquiry into the cultural competence of public administration students. Four control variables for cultural competence (CC) were used in the current study: urban scale, school type, gender, and education level of parents. The urban scale was measured by the population of the city where the university is located. It was coded between 1 and 5 (*5 for the population above ten million, 1 for the population below 500 thousand*). The school type was coded as 0 if the University of the participant is a public university, whereas it was coded as 1 for foundation universities. Table 2 indicates the name of participants' universities, their location, the population of the city where they are located and the medium of instruction in the relevant university's department of public administration. The gender of the participants was gathered from the following multiple-choice survey question: What is your gender? Females were coded as 1, and males coded as 0. The level of education of the participants' parents was collected separately for both their mother and father from the following multiple-choice survey question: What is the highest level of education your father (mother) has completed? These responses were coded from 1 (*elementary school*) to 4 (*bachelor's, master's degree or higher*).

The model suggests that five independent variables—ethical leadership (EL), civic action (CA), political awareness (PA), belief in collective action (BCA), and social justice attitudes (SJA)—influence CC.

Fig. 1. Research Model.

Table 1
Traditional Public Administration and Responsive Governance.

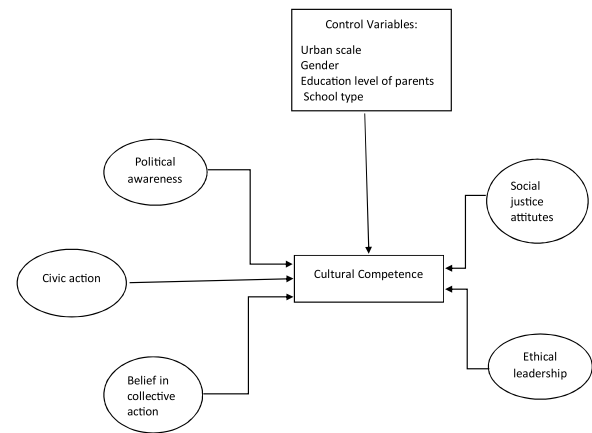|	Traditional Public Administration	Responsive Governance
Citizen-state Relationship	Obedience	Empowerment
Accountability of senior officials	Politicians	Citizens and stakeholders
Criteria for Success	Output	Process
Key Attribute	Impartiality	Responsiveness

Source: UN/DESA (2005, p. 16)

Table 2
Participant Universities with Undergraduate Public Administration Programs.

Location	City Population (in 000)	University		Medium of Instruction in Department
		Name	Type	
İstanbul	Over 10.000	İstanbul University	Public	Turkish
İstanbul	Over 10.000	Marmara University *	Public	French Turkish
İstanbul	Over 10.000	Beykent University	Foundation	Turkish
Çanakkale	Between 500−1000	Onsekiz Mart University	Public	Turkish
Ankara	Between 5000−10000	Middle East Technical University	Public	English
Ankara	Between 5000−10000	Hacı Bayram Veli University	Public	Turkish
Samsun	Between 1000−5000	Ondokuz Mayıs University	Public	Turkish
Bayburt	Below 500	Bayburt University	Public	Turkish
Giresun	Below 500	Giresun University	Public	Turkish
Ordu	Between 500−1000	Ordu University	Public	Turkish
Gümüşhane	Below 500	Gümüşhane University	Public	Turkish
Rize	Below 500	Recep Tayyip Erdogan University	Public	Turkish
Trabzon	Between 500−1000	Avrasya University	Foundation	Turkish
Trabzon	Between 500−1000	Karadeniz Technical University	Public	Turkish
Erzurum	Between 500−1000	Atatürk University	Public	Turkish
Sivas	Between 500−1000	Cumhuriyet University	Public	Turkish
Erzincan	Below 500	Binali Yıldırım University	Public	Turkish
Çorum	Between 500−1000	Hitit University	Public	Turkish
Aksaray	Below 500	Aksaray University	Public	Turkish
Muğla	Between 500−1000	Sıtkı Koçman University	Public	Turkish
Aydın	Between 1000−5000	Adnan Menderes	Public	Turkish
Gaziantep	Between 1000−5000	Gaziantep University	Public	Turkish

Note: * The University has two separate public administration departments.

2.1. Ethical leadership

The claim that cultural competence and ethics are interconnected is not new to public administration. Students graduating from Public Administration programs aimed at preparing students for responsive public service should be able to conduct themselves ethically and work within multicultural environments. Nevertheless, for example, membership in the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) is less than 10,000 even though the number of public servants across the US is above 20 million. This fact shows that only a tiny group of the public service workforce is aware of the ASPA Code of Ethics or has been concerned with the public service values that drive the discipline (Cram & Alkadry, 2018). This is problematic because citizens have rights and privileges to be respected by public servants (Blessett, 2018). Furthermore, public leaders have a stronger role of responsibility than do those in any other sector as their power and authority may have an impact on the lives and livelihoods of all citizens (Lopez-Littleton, Blessett, & Burr, 2018). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. There is a positive relationship between public administration students' cultural competence and ethical leadership ability.

2.2. Political awareness

Public managers increasingly confront with a clash in values in a globally connected world as social media and tweets control the political circumstances that influence how public servants implement elected officials' policy mandates (Haque & Gunther-Canada, 2018).

Furthermore, as harsh critics of the current public administration system, Starke, Heckler, and Mackey (2018) prioritize race and racism as one of the most glaring deficiencies in public administration education in the US. They contend that public administration fails to deal with political issues such as race and racism as topics of exploration in the classroom, disregards its ethical responsibility to educate and prepare culturally competent public servants and cyclically recreates racism.

Besides, public administrators face growing challenges because of governments' increasing reliance on authoritative data-driven techniques to manage public services. The onslaught of these techniques to public service weakens democratic values that public administrators should protect and preserve (Haque & Gunther-Canada, 2018). Therefore, students graduating from public administration schools and involved in public service must demonstrate the necessary skills for work that includes, among others, resident engagement (Gaynor & Carrizales, 2018). The public administration practitioners and students are supposed to be aware of local and national issues as well as global problems. Hence, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. There is a positive association between public administration students' cultural competence and their political awareness

2.3. Civic action and belief in collective action

A functioning participatory democracy could be revitalized by a public service model that generates wide-ranging and diverse opportunities for civic engagement to control the productive energies of public administration (Haque & Gunther-Canada, 2018).

If a positive change is going to take place in society, there must be a conscious effort to move from simply understanding oppression to actively creating change. To this end, some social movements support policy reform strategies that combine the knowledge, skills, and will of

activists and organizers from different backgrounds to facilitate meaningful change. The support of the Black Lives Matter movement to Campaign Zero is an example of this kind of relationship (Lopez-Littleton et al., 2018).[1] Based on this argument, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3. Civic action is positively associated with public administration students' cultural competence.

Hypothesis 4. Belief in collective action is positively associated with public administration students' cultural competence.

2.4. Social justice attitudes

Subjective nature and diffuse meanings of words such as justice, fairness, equity, and equality, along with the high expectations, make the evaluation for social justice quite complicated. Even if these concepts belong to the same ethical sphere, there is a difference; the concept of equality implies a "same for all" distribution of resources among citizens. However, the equity introduces potential criteria for a distribution that develops considerations excluding the fixed distribution (Marra & Forss, 2014).

Today, social equity is the fourth pillar of public administration alongside efficiency, effectiveness, and economy (Lopez-Littleton & Blessett, 2015; McCandless & Larson, 2018). Even though it is neglected by profit-maximizing companies (Svara & Brunet, 2004), public servants have ethical duties to promote it (Svara, 2014). Accordingly, professional organizations such as the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) have made promoting social equity a significant part of their code of ethics (McCandless & Larson, 2018).

It is obvious that the socioeconomic and human development of a region highly depends on social equity. Hence, the evaluators are expected to have a strong commitment to diversity with a desire to create a more equitable society for a thorough investigation of emotional, cognitive, and economic mechanisms. The social justice agenda of the evaluation is essential to analyze the inequalities of power and privilege (Marra, 2015).

In the public sector, even though one of the central tenets of classical public administration has been that good administration of government was equally good for everyone, it quickly became apparent that much of public goods and services were not equitably delivered (Cram & Alkadry, 2018). This is why public administration, public affairs, and public policy programs are expected to provide adequate training grounds for students to acquire the necessary skills for resolving inequities. Such training helps the students to understand how social equity, cultural competency, and the classical tasks of public administration—e.g., planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting—overlap. This is important because a public servant lacking motivation for social equity may take little initiative to promote inclusive work environments or cultural competency, thus hindering the responsiveness of public services (McCandless & Larson, 2018). Thus, this study suggests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5. There is a positive relationship between social justice attitudes and the cultural competence of public administration students.

3. Methods

This was a quantitative study using a questionnaire survey to research the cultural competence level of public administration students

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[1] Campaign Zero, the purpose of which is ending police violence against Black people and Black communities through policy reforms, was developed in 2015 and is drawn from President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (Lopez-Littleton et al., 2018).

and factors affecting their level. The study was performed in 22 universities of different sizes and types located in 18 different provinces of Turkey. The characteristics of the universities are summarized in Table 2.

Based on their legal status, there are two main types of regular higher education institutions in Turkey, which are widely known as public universities and foundation (*vakıf*) universities. Foundation universities have an additional governing body, the Council of Trustees, composed of five members. In the country, as of 2019, there are 130 public universities and 73 foundation universities. One hundred twenty-three of the said universities have "public administration" or "political science and public administration" departments in their relevant faculties.

3.1. Participant recruitment

A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect quantitative data. The survey was carried out during classes in the presence of the course instructor in December 2018. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and no students at all refused to fill out the questionnaire. The participants were taken from the last-year students of a 4-year "public administration" or "political science and public administration" program.[2]

A total of 653 questionnaire surveys were distributed, and 599 of them were collected as complete over three weeks from twenty public and two foundation universities in eighteen different provinces (see Table 2). Five hundred thirty-seven questionnaires were confirmed as valid by the logic questions (i.e. the same question asked in different ways), including 334 female respondents (62.2 %) and 203 male respondents (37.8 %).

3.2. Measures

The author initially translated the scales from English into Turkish. Afterward, an English lecturer checked the translations to eliminate possible errors. Then, an initial pilot study carried out with 20 undergraduate political science and public administration students at Avrasya University in Trabzon city. Based on the students' feedback, two items were reworded to be more understandable for the participants.

The questionnaires did not contain any details of the student identity, and the approval of the ethics committee of each participant university was obtained prior to data gathering. In the first part of the questionnaire, eight demographic questions were asked for descriptive purposes and comparison of results across demographic variables. In the second part, the participants were asked to rate their views on 37 different items. All the items were rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Civic action (6 items) was measured by modifying the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) and Public Affairs Scale–Short Survey (PAS-SS) (Levesque-Bristol & Richards, 2014; Moely et al., 2002).

Ethical leadership was measured by adapting the index of eleven items (Levesque-Bristol & Cornelius-White, 2012; Levesque-Bristol & Richards, 2014; Moely et al., 2002) with a seven-point Likert scale.

Cultural competence is operationalized to imply that an individual respects or appreciates people from different cultures and is capable of applying effective behaviors in cross-cultural situations (Borrego & Johnson, 2012; Lopez-Littleton & Blessett, 2015). Concordantly, in this study, cultural competence was measured by the index of seven items (Levesque-Bristol & Richards, 2014; Moely et al., 2002). Two items were reverse coded and combined to yield a composite measure of cultural competence.

Political awareness was measured by six items adopted from the CASQ (Moely et al., 2002). The items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale.

This study measured belief in collective Action by using a four-item scale developed by Baker and Brookins (2014) and social justice attitudes by three items developed by Moely et al. (2002). Negatively worded three items were reverse-coded.

3.3. Control variables

To control for the potential effects of individual characteristics on cultural competence, urban scale, gender, education level of the mother, education level of the father, and school type variables were included in the model.

The urban size was included as a control variable because it is believed to have an impact on different qualities of the inhabitants' life and institutions (Archibugi, 1998; Boschken, 1998).

Besides, for example, some studies such as the one of Vengrin, Westfall-Rudd, Archibald, Rudd, and Singh (2018) have mentioned the location of the college of graduation among factors having the potential to affect organizational culture. In this study, the urban size was coded as an ordinal scale from 1 through 5 based on the cities' population where the universities are located; (1) 500.000 or less, (2) 0,5 – 1 million, (3) 1–5 million, (4) 5–10 million, (5) 10 million or more.

This study controlled for gender and education levels of parents as some studies such as the one of Finnie, Mueller, and Childs (2010); Holtbrügge and Engelhard (2016) have shown their influence on the cultural intelligence of students. The gender variable was coded as "0" for males and "1" for females. Education level was coded as an ordinal scale from 0 (*elementary*) through 4 (*university degree*). Finally, school type was coded as "0" for public universities and "1" for foundation universities. School type was added as a control variable because it is claimed that foundation universities generally prefer administrators who are liberal in their world view (Özdemirci, Özcan, & İldaş, 2014).

3.4. Analysis plan

The current study pursued a three-step analysis strategy similar to the study of Jasuja et al. (2005). Accordingly, first, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on the entire set of variables. A cut-off of an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 was used to determine the number of factors in each group of items. An individual item was retained if it had a factor loading higher than 0.5. s, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the factors and variables obtained from EFA was conducted to produce a measurement model. In the final step of data analysis, structural models were generated from the measurement model, and insignificant paths were deleted. In this study, AMOS 24.0 software was used to generate the CFA and to test the structural models.

4. Results

First, preliminary tests were conducted using SPSS 20.0. Principal component analysis extracted six factors, which explained 60.489 percent of the total variance. The first factor explained only 30,449 percent of the variance, below 50 percent of the total variation. This means that no single factor explained most of the variance.

Besides, KMO and Bartlett's tests were also performed (KMO = 0.902 and Bartlett < 0.001). The KMO statistic varies between 0 and 1, and the minimum KMO value should be 0,6 (Pallant, 2001; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). KMO values over 0.8 suggest that included variables are fittingly predicted without error by other variables. Moreover, Bartlett's test for sphericity is performed to highlight the presence of correlations among the variables, and it should be below 0.05 significance level (Durmuş, Çinko, & Yurtkoru, 2013; George & Mallery, 2016). In this study, KMO and Bartlett's test results suggest that the sample data are suitable for factor analysis.

Later, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to test the validity of variables, and a total of five questionnaire items were eliminated due to inconsistencies and low factor loadings (< 0.5). Later, reliability

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[2] Excluding preparatory classes.

analyses (Cronbach's alpha coefficients, item-total correlations, and alpha if item deleted) were computed and two more items were removed on the basis of the results. Therefore, a total of 30 questionnaire items aside from the demographic questions were taken into consideration for the confirmatory factor analysis and model testing.

Table 3 shows six constructs with Cronbach's alphas and corresponding items with standardized factor loadings. All the survey items associated with their respective constructs were found to be statistically significant (p < .001).

Table 3
Constructs, Survey Items, and Standardized Factor Loadings.

Constructs	Survey Items	Factor loadings
Civic action (α =,804)	I am confident that I will participate in community service activities in the future	,722
	I plan to do some volunteer work next year	,778
	Volunteering will help me succeed in my own profession	,735
	I know I can make a difference in my community	,636
	I plan to become involved in programs to help clean up the environment	,627
Ethical leadership (α =,902)	I plan to help others who are in difficulty	,534
	I understand the importance of being true to my word	,757
	I am aware of what kind of person I am	,663
	I stand by my decisions even when others protest	,640
	I try to make certain that my actions never intentionally harm another person	,610
	I am dependable and reliable	,767
	When working in groups, I try to assure everyone's voice is heard before a decision is reached	,597
	In nearly everything I do, I am striving to improve myself and become a better person	,734
	When making a decision, I weigh the consequences of each alternative	,671
	I usually take an active interest in someone else's concerns	,723
	Traveling allows me to understand different cultures	,598
Cultural Competence (α =,707)	In the future, I will travel to other countries to better understand culture and diversity	,528
	I am able to communicate effectively with people from different cultures	,622
	I enjoy meeting people who come from backgrounds very different from my own	,749
	I can easily relate to people that are different from me	,719
Political awareness (α =,841)	I am aware of current events	,780
	I understand the issues facing (my city's) community	,698
	I understand the issues facing this nation	,811
	I am knowledgeable of the issues facing the world	,720
Social Justice attitudes (α =,800)	People are poor because they choose to be poor (R)	,893
	Individuals are responsible for their own misfortunes (R)	,895
Belief in collective action (α =,735)	In order for problems to be solved, we need to change public policy	,781
	We need to institute reforms within the current system to change our communities	,830
	We need to change people's attitudes in order to solve social problems	,704

Note: Cronbach's alpha in parentheses.

Table 4 indicates the minimum and maximum score, the mean and the standard deviation along with the correlated coefficient information of the overall variables. As can be seen in Table 4, all tested independent variables except social justice attitudes were found to have a statistically significant correlation to cultural competence.

4.1. Analyses and model assessment

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to empirically test the proposed model, which appears in Fig. 1. The measurement model should be validated before testing the structural model. It examines the reliability and validity of the indicators for the corresponding construct, while the structural model validates the hypothesized paths among constructs (Kline, 1998).

4.2. Measurement and structural models

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a multivariate technique used to confirm a hypothesized relationship structure between the items and the factors. It is usually known as the measurement model in structural equation modeling (SEM) (Nu'man, 2012). In this study, a measurement model in which all factors were allowed to covary was imposed.

As for the data model fit criteria, a measurement model can be valid when the value of Normed Chi-Square (X2/df) is between 2 and 5, values of Goodness of fit index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) are greater than.90 and the value of Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is less than .08 (Byrne, 2001; Kim & Lee, 2012; Medsker & Turban, 1994). This model was found to be valid, as evidenced by the adequacy indices such as CFI (.915), IFI (.915), RMSEA (.054) and, χ2/df (2.55).

Later, correlations between control variables and the dependent variable were examined. Independent sample t-tests were used to analyze the differences in gender and school type, whereas one-way ANOVA (F) tests were conducted for the difference between three or more sub-groups of urban scale and education level of parents. The level of significance was set at P < 0.05.

The *t*-test results postulated significant differences in overall cultural competency for male (Mean = 20.34, SD = 4.55) and female students (Mean = 21.78, SD = 4.00), t = -3.73, p = 0.000. Nonetheless, no significant difference was found for public (Mean = 21.20, SD = 4.33) and foundation university students (Mean = 21.80, SD = 3.04), t = -0.75, p = 0.455.

The one-way ANOVA results suggested that there is a significant difference in the cultural competency of students based on the urban scale (F = 3.130; p = 0.015). Nevertheless, no significant difference was found based on the education level of the father (F = 1.933; p = 0.104) and mother (F = 0.716; p = 0.581).

As a result, urban scale and gender were found to affect cultural competence. Thus, these two variables were included as exogenous variables in the SEM-analyses.

Table 5 summarizes the results of the SEM-analyses for the competing models. As seen in Table 5, the tested models were a 4-factor model (SJA removed) with urban scale and gender, 4-factor model (SJA removed) with urban scale, 3-factor model (SJA and EL removed) – with urban scale, and a 5-factor (hypothesized) model (included all factors) with urban scale and gender.

As seen in the table, the parsimonious index of χ2/df (4.024) and the other parsimonious fit index of RMSEA support the hypothesized structural model (.075), given that the threshold scores for RMSEA are generally lower than .08. However, GFI (.839), CFI (.829) and IFI (.830) do not support the validity of the model as they are considered an excellent fit when they are greater than 0.9.

The results indicate that the 3-factor model—i.e. Alternative model3—provided a good fit that was superior to both the 4- and 5-factor models. As seen in Table 5, the parsimonious index of χ2/df (3.941), and the values of RMSEA (.074), GFI (.921), CFI (.904) and IFI (.905)

Table 4
Descriptive statistics and correlation.

		N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Urban Scale (1–5)	537	1,00	5,00	2,39	1,31										
2	Gender (male = 0; female = 1)	537	0,00	1,00	0,62	0,49	0,008									
3	Education level of mother (0-4)	537	0,00	4,00	1,74	1,12	0,193**	−0,101**								
4	Education level of father (0-4)	537	0,00	4,00	2,32	1,11	0,290**	−0,049	0,515**							
5	School Type (Public = 0; Foundation = 1)	537	0,00	1,00	0,06	0,23	0,207**	−0,044	0,214**	0,236**						
6	Ethical_leadership	537	11,00	77,00	67,90	9,47	−0,015	0,228**	−0,016	−0,018	0,034					
7	Civic action	537	5,00	35,00	25,76	5,80	0,031	0,242**	−0,012	0,060	0,021	0,486**				
8	Cultural competence	537	4,00	28,00	21,23	4,27	0,110*	0,164**	0,045	0,119**	0,032	0,477**	0,371**			
9	Political awareness	537	4,00	28,00	23,30	3,86	0,136**	0,003	0,085*	0,070	0,053	0,543**	0,0298**	0,369**		
10	Belief in Collective Action	537	3,00	21,00	17,21	3,44	0,071	0,085*	−0,039	−0,023	0,063	0,324**	0,244**	0,288**	0,330**	
11	Social Justice attitudes	537	2,00	14,00	10,61	3,53	0,033	0,185**	−0,043	−0,036	−0,038	0,176**	0,054	0,095*	0,071	0,043

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; * * $p < 0.01$.

Table 5
Model Comparisons: Goodness-of-Fit Indices.

Model	CMIN $\chi2(df)$	CMIN/DF $\chi2/df$	GFI	CFI	IFI	RMSEA
Hypothesized model	1380,308 (343)	4,024	,839	,829	,830	,075
Alternative model 1	1282,060 (293)	4,376	,840	,827	,828	,079
Alternative model 2	1184,381 (269)	4,403	,846	,837	,838	,080
Alternative model 3	295,567 (75)	3,941	,921	,904	,905	,074
Cut-off value	N/A	1.0–5.0	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08

demonstrated a good fit. Thus, alternative model 3 is retained as the revised study model as it is the best-fitting among others.

Afterward, regression analysis was run for the competing models. Table 6 shows the path coefficient for each model, together with the particular significance (p-value). The path significance was consistent across all investigated models. That is, a path found to be significant in one model remained so in the other models. As seen in the table, the revised study model—alternative model 3—accounted for 23 % of the variance on cultural competence. In the model, even if the absolute magnitude was not large (Adjusted R 2 = 0,23), all the independent variables—i.e., CA, BCA, and PA—had a significant and positive effect on public administration students' cultural competence.

5. Research findings

The changing context in the public administration discipline concerning the rise of responsive governance approach paved the way for fresh debates regarding cultural issues in public service provision. Accordingly, the evaluation of cultural competence has become more significant for both public administration education and practice. Based on this fact, this paper proposed a CC evaluation model for students – i. e., future practitioners-that includes five attributes and 29 indicators as displayed in Table 3.

6. Discussion and future work

Several implications of the study findings are worth considering. First, the demographic results based on Table 4 suggest that the education level of public administration students' parents, school type, and urban scale are significantly correlated. So, a public administration student is more likely to be enrolled in a foundation university when the education level of his/her parents is higher. Put another way, less educated parents cannot afford higher expenses for their children. Besides, undergraduate students in a public administration program in big cities are likely to have more educated parents. Given the higher tuition fees of foundation universities and expenses for students in big cities-e.g. rental, commuting-this is plausible. It may also be argued that educated parents' children have a higher chance of obtaining higher university exam scores for being admitted to a reputable public administration program in big cities.

Second, a limited impact of urban scale on cultural competence was also found in this research. There may be two reasons behind this. Primarily, it is because more talented students overwhelmingly prefer to pursue their higher studies at universities in big cities, and they are arguably more receptive to cultural issues. Besides, the impact of the cities on culture is an acknowledged issue (Park & Burgess, 2019; Wirth & Bernert, 1949), and big cities are the places where the students have more opportunities for intercultural interactions.

The third and probably the most significant implication of the current study is that unlike previous studies such as the one of Iverson (2012), no direct causal relationship between cultural competence and

Table 6
Significance and Strength of Individual Paths.

Hypothesized relationships	Hypothesis	Hypothesized model	Alternative model 1	Alternative model 2	Alternative model 3
CC <— EL	H1	0.309***	0.297***	0.311***	–
CC <— PA	H2	0.173***	0.170***	0.156***	0.280***
CC <— CA	H3	0.169***	0.190***	0.202***	0.307***
CC <— BCA	H4	0.115**	0.112*	0.114**	0.143***
CC <— SJA	H5	−0.020	–	–	–
R2		0.288	0.288	0.286	0.232
Adjusted R2		0.279	0.280	0.279	0.226

* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

social justice attitudes was found for the public administration students in the Turkish context. In other words, the prospective public managers may equally have the same level of cultural competence as measured in this study regardless of their perceptions on the role of the citizen himself for his own misfortunes. However, this cannot be viewed as a total deviation from other contexts as the results on other independent variables—i.e., civic action, political awareness, ethical leadership, belief in collective action— are in line with previous studies.

Finally, despite the abovementioned findings, this study has some limitations. A follow-up study would be beneficial in providing more in-depth nuance leading to a satisfactory explanation of why a deviation from the literature regarding social justice attitudes occurred in the study, although other results are in line. Hence, there is considerable room for future studies and scholars to make different judgments on this topic. In addition, the adjusted R2 values in the models are above 0.20, showing reasonable explanatory power of the regression models to test the research question. However, future studies can be conducted to consider and evaluate other factors.

7. Concluding remarks

Public organizations should employ culturally competent public servants to keep their responsiveness to the citizenry. Evaluation of the CC in public organizations is a springboard for establishing responsive governance, and there is a need for a structured and validated model to evaluate the CC level of public servants.

Given that, this paper examined the CC indicators for evaluating the responsiveness capacity. Through a literature review about different cultural dimensions along with a discussion of public administration theories, and relevant statistical analyses, the current study suggests a model of a new set of evaluation criteria, which can be used to measure the CC level of public administration students as well as public servants.

Many public organizations and governments today are turning their attention to the question of how to design evaluations in order to guide the allocation of resources so that resources consumed, as well as the outcomes produced are optimal — according to multiple stakeholders, not just the relative few who make resource allocation decisions. However, this is a complex issue in the public sector where different perspectives[3] value resources and outcomes in a different way, sometimes generating completely different findings (Yates & Marra, 2017). This issue also poses an intriguing challenge for public administration/affairs programs. The new paradigm prioritizes social equity in the provision of public services. So, these programs deal with the changing understanding and, accordingly, they put more emphasis on topics such as cultural competency and include more diversity courses in their curriculum.

In public administration, a focus on cultural differences does not fit the traditional neutrality/equality principles advocating treatment of all clients with the same neutral feelings (Rice, 2007: 624). Thus, public administration/affairs students and practitioners must be willing to confront their own biases and challenge long-standing assumptions (Cram & Alkadry, 2018; Lopez-Littleton et al., 2018). This understanding is critical if public managers are to implement public policies effectively. Better coverage of cultural competency, especially when matched with classroom strategies, is usually cited as a way to uphold multicultural awareness (Hewins-Maroney & Williams, 2007; McCandless & Larson, 2018).

Most students in public administration/affairs programs either are now serving or will serve the public interest in some capacity. However, they are supposed to be culturally competent to understand their stakeholders' needs. In other words, public managers' ability to provide responsive public service highly depends on the quality of their education about cultural competency and diversity issues. In a recent descriptive study, Hergüner (2019b) has shown that public administration / political science and public administration departments in Turkey are doing well in terms of the number of diversity courses. Nevertheless, the quality of a course is something else, and the course instructors should be aware of factors affecting the cultural competence of their students. Thus, this study was performed in 22 universities of different sizes and types located in various regions of Turkey for a thorough investigation of the factors affecting public administration students' cultural competence.

To sum up, multicultural approaches to evaluation have not been hitherto given much attention in the field. Knowledge is scarce on how cultural competence can be used in the evaluation of public organizations. Given the growing cultural diversity of societies in many countries, this limitation is undesirable (Hopson, 2003, p. 1). There is a need for more knowledge on how to enhance the responsiveness of public institutions. In this regard, the main contribution of this article is the proposal of a cultural competence model.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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[3] Authors define perspective as to how different stakeholders define, measure, analyze, and understand programs, the resources they consume, the activities funded, the processes changed, and the outcomes generated.

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