

# “FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG GEN Z”

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**Abstract:** This research aims to assess the factors influencing Cultural Intelligence (CQ) among Gen Z, focusing on cultural engagement, the perceived importance of diversity, and individuals' comfort levels in cross-cultural interactions. The study explores several key areas such as the frequency with which Gen Z adapts communication styles in different social and cultural contexts, the interaction frequency with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and the preferred methods for learning about other cultures. The role of technology and social media as tools for engaging with diverse cultural perspectives is also examined, alongside the participants' beliefs about the significance of cultural knowledge and diversity in today's interconnected world.

Additionally, the survey delves into the importance of social justice issues, the need for diverse online communities, and the role of cultural events in enhancing awareness and fostering inclusivity. The respondents' comfort with expressing their own cultural identities, adapting to cultural norms, and engaging in discussions on sensitive cultural topics is also evaluated.

The research seeks to identify patterns in Gen Z's cultural awareness and competency, with the ultimate goal of understanding how various demographic, psychological, and social factors contribute to the development of cultural intelligence. Through factor analysis, the study aims to draw insights that can inform both academic research and practical applications, helping to foster more inclusive environments in education, workplaces, and social settings. These insights will also offer a comprehensive understanding of how Gen Z navigates cultural diversity in a globalized world, providing valuable data for future cultural competence initiatives and social integration strategies.

**Keywords:** Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Gen Z, Diversity, Cross-cultural Interactions, Social Justice, Cultural Engagement

## I. INTRODUCTION

In an era defined by rapid globalization and digital interconnectivity, the development of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is increasingly recognized as a critical competency for the modern workforce. This research investigates the factors contributing to CQ among Generation Z—individuals born between 1997 and 2012—who are entering a labor market characterized by multicultural teams and virtual collaboration. As organizations worldwide place greater emphasis on diversity and inclusion, the ability to navigate and interpret cultural differences is essential for effective communication and innovation.

Cultural Intelligence extends beyond emotional intelligence by contextualizing interactions within a broader cultural framework. It involves a multidimensional skill set: the cognitive ability to learn and analyze cultural information, the metacognitive capacity to reflect on and adjust one's cultural assumptions, and the behavioral and motivational skills necessary for adapting to diverse cultural environments. This study examines these dimensions by exploring how frequently Gen Z adapts their communication style to suit various social settings, how often they engage with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, and what methods they prefer for learning about different cultures.

Moreover, the research assesses the role of technology and social media as vital tools for fostering cultural awareness and facilitating cross-cultural interactions. The survey further investigates the significance that respondents attach to social justice issues, access to diverse online communities, and participation in cultural events to enhance inclusivity. By employing factor analysis, the study seeks to identify underlying patterns in cultural engagement, perceived importance, and comfort with cultural interactions.

The insights generated from this research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how demographic, psychological, and social factors shape CQ among Gen Z. These findings are expected to have practical implications for designing inclusive educational programs, workplace training, and broader social integration strategies, ultimately supporting efforts to build more culturally competent communities in an increasingly globalized world.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Objectives

- To evaluate the overall Cultural Intelligence of Generation Z by examining their cultural engagement, adaptability, and comfort with diverse social norms.
- To assess the influence of diversity, technology, and social media on shaping Gen Z's cultural competence.
- To identify key demographic, psychological, and social factors and barriers that affect the development of Cultural Intelligence among Gen Z.

### 2.2 Hypothesis

**H0:** Cultural engagement, digital tool use, and diverse interactions do not affect Cultural Intelligence among Gen Z, regardless of demographics.

**H1:** Cultural engagement, digital tool use, and diverse interactions enhance Cultural Intelligence among Gen Z, moderated by demographics.

### 2.3 Sampling

To ensure a diverse representation of Generation Z, an online sampling method will be employed by distributing a Google Form via WhatsApp. This approach leverages WhatsApp's popularity among Gen Z, enabling data collection from various regions. The study will target a sample size of 124 respondents to gather comprehensive insights, ensuring a broad range of perspectives. This cost-effective method facilitates efficient data collection on factors influencing Cultural Intelligence.

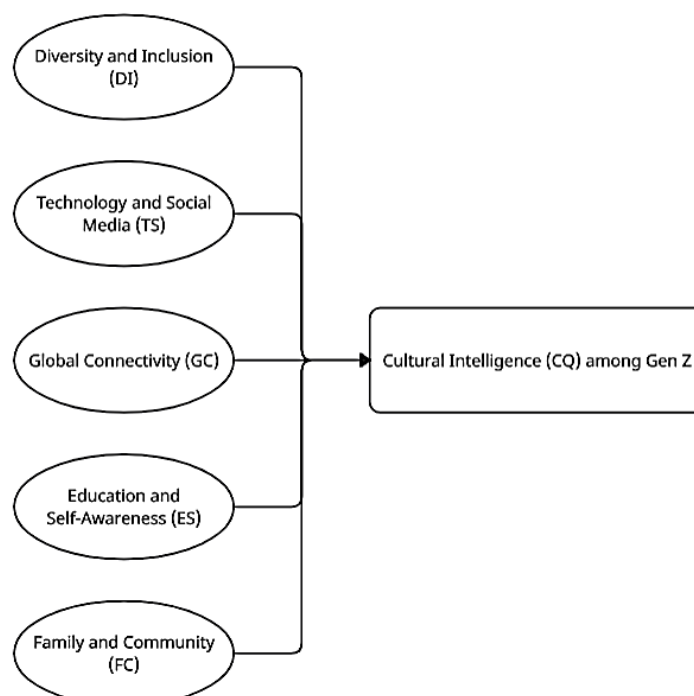
### 2.4 Data Analysis Tool

Data from the survey will be analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23, employing descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to uncover underlying patterns among variables. EFA helps identify latent constructs by examining correlations among observed variables, facilitating a deeper understanding of the data structure.

### 2.5 Limitations

- Responses may be influenced by social desirability or misinterpretation of questions, affecting data accuracy.
- The study's design does not allow for tracking changes in cultural intelligence over time or establishing causality.
- Recent socio-political or cultural events may bias participant responses, affecting the validity of the data.
- The language used in the survey may not be equally accessible or interpretable by all respondents, leading to misinterpretation.
- The quantitative nature of the survey may not capture in-depth, qualitative insights into respondents' cultural experiences.

### 2.6 Research Model



### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural intelligence(CQ) is regarded as a multidimensional concept. According to Earley and Ang (2003), CQ is conceptualized to comprise four dimensions: metacognition (cognitive strategies to acquire and develop coping strategies), cognition (knowledge about different cultures), motivation (desire and self-efficacy), and behavior (repertoire of culturally appropriate behaviors); later refined as an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings that can be developed and enhanced through interventions (Ang et al, 2007). Earley and Ang's (2003) concept will help to get through the surface and manifestation levels of diversity for tackling the founding values-based diversity and identifying its potential advantages. Developing the CQ dimensions and skills will help to see beyond the surface-level manifestations of diversity and thus understand the other better (Karma and Vedina (2009).

Generation Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019), presents unique challenges and opportunities for the study of CQ. With their extensive digital connectivity, Gen Z has unprecedented access to information about different cultures, histories, and social issues. This exposure allows them to develop a more nuanced understanding of cultural diversity, which can enrich their own cultural identity. (Rafiq Daffa, Arturo, Fernanda, & Widya Pratama, n.d.). This digital exposure not only enhances their cultural knowledge but also shapes their methods of cultural engagement, offering a nuanced perspective on cultural diversity and social justice (Pásztor, 2020).

Understanding and accepting cultural differences is a relatively lengthy process, but a worker with a high level of cultural intelligence can perform much more effectively in a multicultural environment. Cultural intelligence not only helps people in the field of emotional expression but also enables them to use their skills appropriately in other cultures (Pásztor, 2021). Globalization has led international companies to form culturally diverse teams, and technological advancements now allow these groups to work virtually, often without sharing the same physical space, thereby increasing challenges in collaboration Han & Beyerlein, 2016). Overall, the integration of these CQ dimensions is crucial for effective communication and collaboration in multicultural environments, especially as Generation Z becomes a prominent force in the global labor market. Understanding how Gen Z develops and applies Cultural Intelligence remains critical for both academic inquiry and the practical management of diverse work and social settings.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

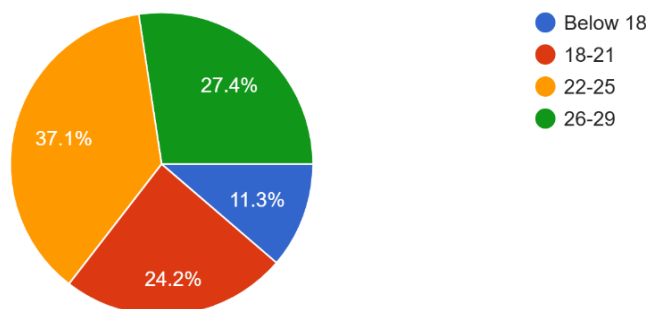
#### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

##### 4.1.1 Age Frequency Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 18	14	11.3
18-21	30	24.2
22-25	46	37.1
26-29	34	27.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Age:

124 responses



**Interpretation:**

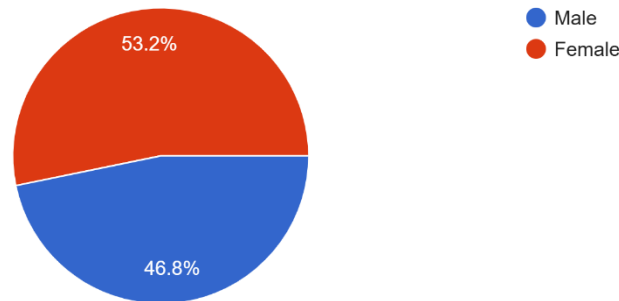
This data indicates that the majority of participants are aged between 22 and 25, comprising 37.1% of the sample. The next largest group is 26 to 29-year-olds at 27.4%, followed by 18 to 21-year-olds at 24.2%, and those below 18 at 11.3%. This distribution suggests a higher representation of individuals in their early to mid-twenties among the respondents.

**4.1.2 Gender Frequency Distribution**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	58	46.8
Female	66	53.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Gender Identity:

124 responses



**Interpretation:**

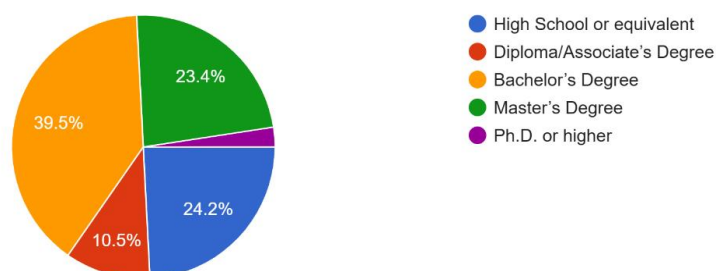
The gender distribution of the survey respondents is relatively balanced, with females comprising 53.2% (66 individuals) and males accounting for 46.8% (58 individuals) of the total 124 participants. This near-equal representation suggests that the survey results are likely to reflect perspectives from both genders without significant bias toward either group.

**4.1.3 High-Level of Education Completed Frequency Distribution**

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
High School or equivalent	30	24.2
Diploma/Associate's Degree	13	10.5
Bachelor's Degree	49	39.5
Master's Degree	29	23.4
Ph.D. or higher	3	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Highest Level of Education Completed:

124 responses



**Interpretation:**

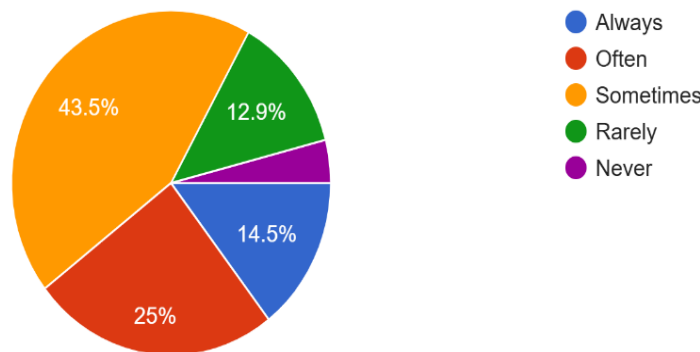
The data reveals that 39.5% of respondents have attained a Bachelor's degree, making it the most common educational level among participants. Following this, 24.2% have completed high school or an equivalent qualification, 23.4% hold a Master's degree, 10.5% possess a Diploma or Associate's degree, and 2.4% have achieved a Ph.D. or higher. This distribution indicates that a significant majority of respondents, approximately 75.8%, have pursued higher education beyond high school.

**4.1.4 How often do you adapt your communication style to match different social or cultural situations?**

Communication style matching	Frequency	Percent
Always	18	14.5
Often	31	25.0
Sometimes	54	43.5
Rarely	16	12.9
Never	5	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

How often do you adapt your communication style to match different social or cultural situations?

124 responses



**Interpretation:**

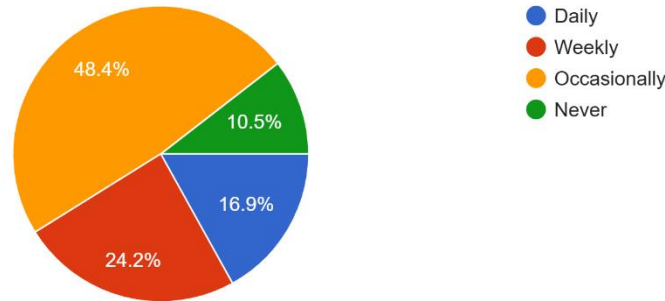
The data indicates that 14.5% of respondents always adapt their communication style to different social or cultural situations, while 25% do so often. A significant portion, 43.5%, sometimes adjust their communication style, whereas 12.9% rarely and 4% never make such adaptations. This suggests that while a majority are attentive to cultural contexts in communication, there remains a notable segment that seldom or never considers such adjustments.

**4.1.5 How often do you interact with people from different cultural backgrounds?**

Cultural Interaction	Frequency	Percent
Daily	21	16.9
Weekly	30	24.2
Occasionally	60	48.4
Never	13	10.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

How often do you interact with people from different cultural backgrounds?

124 responses



**Interpretation:**

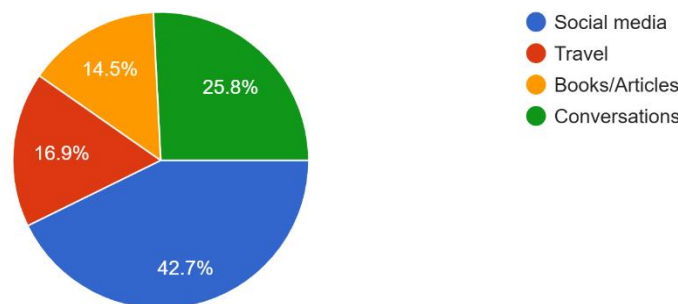
The data indicates that cultural interactions among respondents vary in frequency. Approximately 16.9% engage in such interactions daily, while 24.2% do so weekly. A significant portion, 48.4%, interacts with different cultures occasionally, and 10.5% have never engaged in such interactions. This distribution suggests that while a majority have some level of cultural interaction, the frequency and depth of these engagements differ among individuals.

**4.1.6 What’s your preferred way of learning about other cultures?**

Learning Culture	Frequency	Percent
Social media	53	42.7
Travel	21	16.9
Books/Articles	18	14.5
Conversations	32	25.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

What’s your preferred way of learning about other cultures?

124 responses



**Interpretation:**

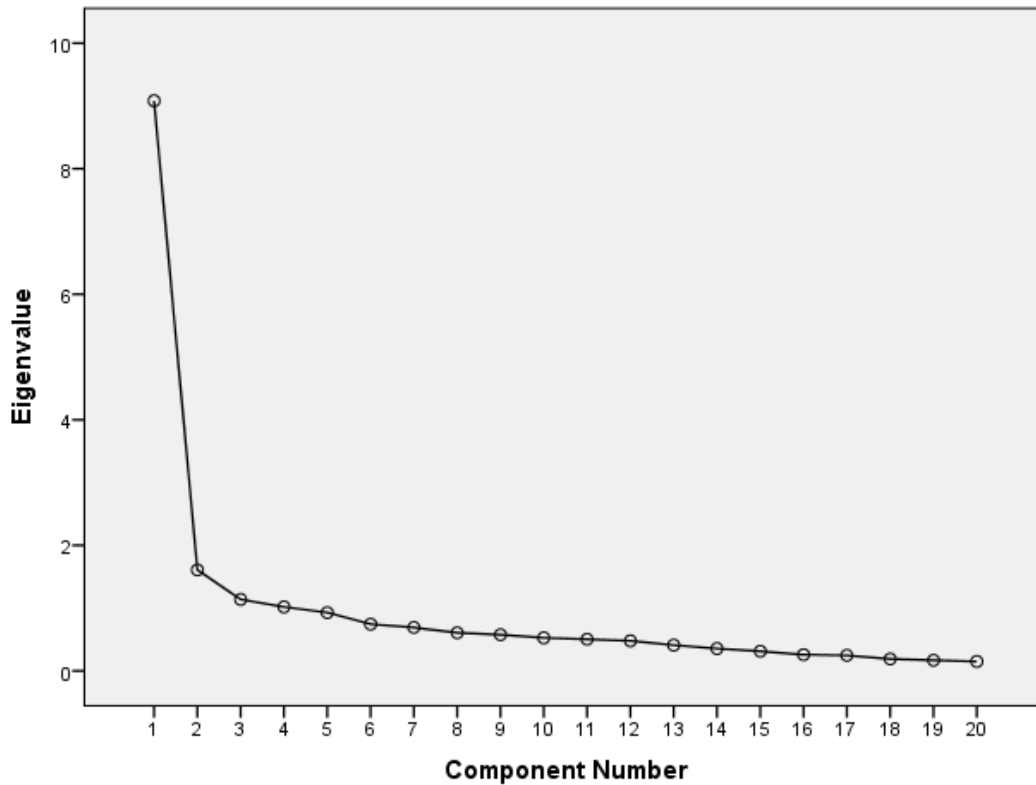
The survey results indicate that respondents acquire cultural knowledge through various channels. Social media is the most prevalent medium, utilized by 42.7% of participants. Conversations with others serve as a source for 25.8%, while travel experiences contribute to 16.9% of respondents' cultural learning. Additionally, 14.5% of individuals turn to books and articles to enhance their understanding of different cultures.

## 4.2 Factor Analysis

### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.895
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	df
	Sig.
	1407.157
	190
	.000

Scree Plot



Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
DI1	1.000	.695
DI2	1.000	.628
DI3	1.000	.654
DI4	1.000	.596
DI5	1.000	.760
TS1	1.000	.724
TS2	1.000	.689
TS3	1.000	.649
TS4	1.000	.695
GC1	1.000	.735
GC2	1.000	.615
GC3	1.000	.732
GC4	1.000	.610
ES1	1.000	.679
ES2	1.000	.619
ES3	1.000	.785
ES4	1.000	.633
FC1	1.000	.742
FC2	1.000	.731
FC3	1.000	.805

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.082	45.411	45.411	9.082	45.411	45.411	4.412	22.061	22.061
2	1.608	8.042	53.453	1.608	8.042	53.453	2.912	14.560	36.622
3	1.139	5.693	59.145	1.139	5.693	59.145	2.496	12.480	49.101
4	1.019	5.096	64.241	1.019	5.096	64.241	1.980	9.901	59.002
5	.929	4.644	68.885	.929	4.644	68.885	1.977	9.883	68.885
6	.744	3.720	72.606						
7	.692	3.458	76.063						
8	.607	3.033	79.097						
9	.576	2.880	81.977						
10	.526	2.629	84.606						
11	.504	2.520	87.127						
12	.479	2.393	89.519						
13	.411	2.053	91.572						
14	.356	1.778	93.350						
15	.313	1.567	94.917						
16	.259	1.294	96.211						
17	.247	1.233	97.445						
18	.190	.952	98.397						
19	.170	.851	99.247						
20	.151	.753	100.000						

**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
DI1	.635				
DI2	.636				
DI3	.689				
DI4	.664				
DI5	.528				
TS1		.786			
TS2		0.488			
TS3		.592			
TS4		.608			
GC1			.604		
GC2			.598		
GC3			.805		
GC4			.563		
ES1				.625	
ES2				.626	
ES3				.761	
ES4				.607	
FC1					.778
FC2					.647
FC3					.811

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 11 iterations.



**Component Transformation Matrix**

Component	1	2	3	4	5
1	.633	.465	.406	.311	.349
2	-.463	-.384	.490	.568	.274
3	-.587	.730	.282	-.200	-.058
4	-.161	.317	-.689	.621	.118
5	.123	.058	.202	.394	-.886

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

### Interpretation:

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.895, which is considered 'meritorious' according to Kaiser (1974), indicating that the sample is suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yields a chi-square value of 1407.157 with 190 degrees of freedom and a significance level of  $p < 0.001$ , suggesting that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that factor analysis is appropriate.

The communalities, representing the proportion of each variable's variance explained by the extracted factors, range from 0.596 to 0.805. This indicates that a substantial amount of variance in each variable is accounted for by the factors.

This scree plot visualizes the eigenvalues for each component in a factor analysis or principal component analysis (PCA). The steep drop in eigenvalues between the first and second components, followed by a more gradual decline, suggests that the optimal number of factors to retain is around 4 or 5, based on the "elbow" criterion.

In this analysis, five distinct factors emerge, each representing a unique cluster of variables that share common themes:

#### Factor 1: Diversity and Inclusion (DI)

The Rotated Component Matrix reveals that variables DI1 through DI5 load strongly on Component 1, with loadings ranging from 0.528 to 0.689. This factor reflects the importance placed on working in diverse environments, learning about different cultures, and expressing one's cultural identity. It suggests a clear dimension of inclusivity and a commitment to engaging with cultural diversity.

#### Factor 2: Technology and Social Media (TS)

Component 2 is defined by high loadings on variables TS1 through TS4, with values between 0.488 and 0.786. This factor emphasizes the role of digital tools in facilitating cultural engagement. It indicates that the use of social media for sharing cultural content and connecting with diverse groups is a key contributor to Cultural Intelligence among Gen Z.

#### Factor 3: Global Connectivity (GC)

Variables GC1 through GC4 load prominently on Component 3, with loadings from 0.563 to 0.805. This factor represents the extent of engagement with global cultural narratives, such as participating in international conversations and following worldwide events. It highlights the importance of global awareness and connectivity in shaping cultural competence.

#### Factor 4: Education and Self-Awareness (ES)

Component 4 is characterized by strong loadings for ES1 through ES4, ranging from 0.607 to 0.761. This factor captures the dimension of education and self-reflection, indicating that a continuous process of learning about cultural differences and reflecting on personal biases is crucial for developing cultural intelligence.

#### Factor 5: Family and Community (FC)

Finally, Factor 5, with high loadings on FC1 through FC3 (ranging from 0.647 to 0.811), underscores the role of family and community in shaping cultural identity. This factor suggests that cultural interactions within familial and communal settings significantly contribute to an individual's overall cultural competence.

## V. FINDINGS

1. Most respondents (37.1%) are aged 22–25, indicating that young adults form the core of the sample. This suggests that the study mainly reflects the perspectives of early-career individuals.
2. The gender split is almost even, with 53.2% female and 46.8% male participants, ensuring a balanced view from both genders. This balance helps in reducing gender bias in the findings.

3. A large majority (75.8%) have pursued education beyond high school, with 39.5% holding a Bachelor's degree. This high level of education may contribute to better cultural understanding and engagement.
4. About 43.5% of participants sometimes change their communication style to fit different cultural settings, although only 14.5% always do so. This shows that while many are aware of the need to adapt, consistent application varies.
5. Cultural interactions vary widely; 16.9% interact daily with people from diverse backgrounds, 48.4% do so occasionally, and 10.5% never interact with different cultures. This variation points to differences in exposure to cultural diversity among respondents.
6. Social media is the most popular way to learn about other cultures, used by 42.7% of respondents, followed by conversations and travel. This indicates a strong reliance on digital platforms for cultural education.
7. Factor analysis shows that items related to diversity and inclusion (DI1–DI5) cluster together, suggesting that valuing diverse environments is a key part of cultural intelligence for Gen Z.
8. The analysis also reveals that technology and social media (TS1–TS4) form a distinct group, highlighting the role of digital engagement in sharing cultural content and connecting with diverse groups.
9. Items related to global connectivity (GC1–GC4) load on a separate factor, indicating that awareness of international news and cross-cultural conversations significantly contribute to cultural intelligence.
10. Educational and self-awareness items (ES1–ES4) cluster together, suggesting that continuous learning and self-reflection are important for developing cultural competence.
11. Family and community influences (FC1–FC3) also form their own group, underscoring the role of supportive social networks in shaping cultural identity.
12. Overall, the study finds that Cultural Intelligence among Gen Z is influenced by a mix of digital engagement, global awareness, education, and interpersonal support, highlighting the multifaceted nature of cultural competence.

## VI. SUGGESTIONS

1. Introduce cross-cultural exchange programs in schools and universities to boost direct interaction with diverse cultures. Such initiatives can include international projects, workshops, and student exchanges that provide hands-on experiences.
2. Enhance digital literacy initiatives that focus on evaluating cultural content on social media. This will help individuals critically analyze online information, reducing the risk of bias while fostering informed cultural discussions.
3. Incorporate comprehensive diversity and inclusion training in both academic and workplace settings. These sessions should cover topics like unconscious bias and effective cross-cultural communication to build a more inclusive environment.
4. Develop mentorship programs pairing individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Such programs encourage the exchange of personal experiences and practical strategies for navigating multicultural environments.
5. Encourage active participation in community events and cultural festivals. These gatherings offer practical exposure to diverse cultural expressions and promote appreciation for cultural differences.
6. Integrate cultural competence modules into educational curricula at various levels. Including case studies and role-playing exercises will help students understand the importance of cultural diversity from an early age.
7. Support study-abroad and virtual exchange programs to connect Gen Z with international peers. These programs not only broaden cultural horizons but also cultivate global perspectives and adaptability skills.
8. Create dedicated online platforms to facilitate structured cultural dialogues and discussions. Such platforms can serve as safe spaces for sharing experiences and debating cultural topics, enhancing mutual understanding.
9. Organize workshops and seminars that address social justice issues related to cultural diversity. These events can raise awareness about equity and representation while encouraging proactive community engagement.

10. Implement reflective practices, such as journaling and group discussions, to help individuals recognize and overcome personal biases. Regular reflection fosters deeper cultural understanding and continuous personal growth.
11. Promote interdisciplinary research on the impact of technology on cultural intelligence. Collaborative studies can provide insights into how digital tools shape cultural competence, informing future policy and educational reforms.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing Cultural Intelligence (CQ) among Generation Z. Findings reveal that Gen Z exhibits notable cultural engagement, primarily shaped by digital platforms, social media, and interpersonal interactions. While many respondents adapt their communication styles and engage with diverse cultures, some show lower adaptability, indicating varying levels of CQ. Technology plays a dual role—enhancing cultural awareness but also limiting deeper, real-world cross-cultural experiences.

Social justice awareness and diverse online communities significantly influence CQ, with Gen Z valuing inclusivity and equitable representation. While many feel comfortable discussing cultural topics and adapting to different norms, some face barriers such as limited exposure or socio-cultural constraints. The study reinforces that CQ is shaped by demographic, psychological, and social factors, with digital tools playing a crucial role in fostering cross-cultural exchanges.

The research has practical implications for education, corporate training, and policymaking. Organizations and educators can leverage these insights to develop cross-cultural training programs, inclusive curricula, and digital initiatives that promote meaningful cultural engagement. However, the study acknowledges limitations, including potential social desirability bias, the constraints of online surveys, and the lack of longitudinal data. Future research could explore qualitative methods and long-term studies to assess CQ development over different life stages.

In conclusion, this research highlights the evolving nature of CQ among Gen Z and the importance of technology, social engagement, and education in shaping cultural competence. By fostering inclusive and culturally aware environments, stakeholders can better prepare Gen Z to navigate an increasingly globalized world with enhanced cultural intelligence.

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APPENDIX

<b>DI1</b>	I frequently attend cultural events or festivals.
<b>DI2</b>	I regularly engage in conversations with people from different cultural backgrounds.
<b>DI3</b>	I believe it is important to work in a diverse and inclusive environment.
<b>DI4</b>	I find it important to learn about different cultures and traditions.
<b>DI5</b>	I feel comfortable expressing my own cultural identity.
<b>TS1</b>	I share content related to cultural diversity and inclusion on social media.
<b>TS2</b>	I use social media often to connect with people from different cultural backgrounds.
<b>TS3</b>	I find it important to have access to diverse online communities and forums.
<b>TS4</b>	I feel comfortable using technology to communicate with people from different cultures.
<b>GC1</b>	I frequently engage in conversations with people from different countries or regions.
<b>GC2</b>	I follow global news and current events regularly.
<b>GC3</b>	I believe it is important to learn about different cultures and traditions from around the world.
<b>GC4</b>	I feel comfortable adapting to different cultural norms and customs when interacting with people from other countries.
<b>ES1</b>	I regularly reflect on my own biases and assumptions about different cultures.
<b>ES2</b>	I believe it is important to learn about different social justice issues and movements.
<b>ES3</b>	I believe it is important to develop my cultural intelligence and competence.
<b>ES4</b>	I feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics related to cultural diversity and inclusion.
<b>FC1</b>	I frequently participate in cultural events or activities with my family or community.
<b>FC2</b>	I believe it is important to have a supportive community that values cultural diversity and inclusion.
<b>FC3</b>	I often discuss cultural diversity and inclusion with my family and friends.