
FACTORS FACILITATING CULTURAL COMPETENCE OF ARAB IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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Abstract. This study stands out for its exclusive concentration on identifying the key factors that enhance the cultural competence of Arab immigrant women in the European setting. Arab immigrant women encounter significant hurdles when adjusting to European countries, and this research underscores the significance of social support, language acquisition, work opportunities, and acceptance by the host country in fostering cultural competence. The cultural competence of Arab women was assessed using a 23-item Cultural Competence Scale (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). The study involved 300 Arab immigrant women residing in Turkiye (European part), England, and Bulgaria. Factor analysis revealed three dimensions: cultural awareness, knowledge sensitivity, and interpersonal and survival competence. One-way ANOVA analysis indicated significant differences in cultural competence among the three countries based on work status, marital status, and motherhood status. The groups of demographic variables revealed substantial differences in cultural competence. The study offers recommendations for promoting cultural competence among Arab immigrant women based on the findings.

Keywords: Arab Immigrant women, cultural competence, interpersonal competence, motherhood status, work status

Introduction:

Enforcement of the cultural competence of Arab immigrant women in Europe is made possible by several factors. Communication and education remain significant as they help women interact and integrate with the host country. Integrational and social contacts can be found principally in a job and during sports or other activities. Listening to and acknowledging the women's religious and cultural beliefs concerning issues such as modesty and privacy fosters one's understanding of accommodating women adequately. Understanding the diversity within Arab Muslim countries and avoiding generalizations are crucial. Such support may include dealing with issues like loneliness, the potential for domestic violence, and, last but not least, mental health stands positive. Further, it is noble initiatives to fight discrimination and Islamophobia that create a welcoming environment for women to feel that they belong. The importance of culturally appropriate practice in health care – especially mental health service delivery, cannot be underestimated in assisting

these women's general well-being and adjustment. Thus, by addressing these factors, host societies can assist Arab immigrant women in building cultural acumen and help them adapt effectively to European environments. Returning to the purpose of this study, the following question has been developed: What specific factors influence Arab immigrant women's cultural competence in Europe?

This paper is dedicated to determining the influence of language proficiency on the social assimilation of Arab immigrant women in European society. It underscores language's critical and immediate role in their integration, emphasizing that language is not just a tool for communication but a key to unlocking social acceptance and cultural understanding. The function of family and community in the process of cultural integration of Arab immigrant women In what ways can mental health providers effectively assist Arab immigrant women in Europe? Their role is not just crucial; it carries significant weight, as their assistance can significantly impact the well-being and adjustment of these women. Their support addresses mental health issues and provides a crucial pillar of stability and understanding in cultural integration.

Literature Review:

Demographic variables help emphasize the cultural competence of Arab immigrant women in Europe. The average age factor can also be valuable, as youth typically connote better acclimation to new cultural settings since such women attend many more years of school and are socialized outside their home countries (Patel et al., 2011). The educational background may influence cultural competence since educated women contend with better linguistic capacities and more natural access to resources that would aid toward their institutional incorporation. It is also known that this runs down the availability of various housing opportunities, jobs, and social amenities; hence, the higher the socio-economic background of a refugee, the smoother the integration (Eden et al., 2024). One crucial factor to consider is the time spent in the host country. The longer a person has lived in the host country, the more likely their language skills will be better. Additionally, they will have had more time to learn about and understand the local culture and develop social networks. Legal status as a refugee, asylum seeker, or permanent resident structures experience and opportunity; security in this regard brings greater stability and allows for more access to support services (Da Lomba & Sylvie, 2010). Family structure also influences cultural competence: women who have a supportive family network generally cope with cultural transition more easily (Walsh, 1996). All these demographic variables combined contour the potential for integration and the development of cultural competence for Arab immigrant women within their new environments.

Researchers discuss several theoretical frameworks to handle this issue. Of critical relevance is acculturation theory, which examines how an individual adjusts to a new cultural environment. This would call for a balance between retaining one's original culture and integrating with the host society. This theory proposes different strategies, such as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization, which may impact cultural competence (Walsh, 1996). Another is the intersectionality theory explores how multiple social identities, such as gender, ethnicity, SES, and immigration status, come together to shape experiences and opportunities. In this respect, the framework would explain how the plight of Arab immigrant women is compounded (Taha, 2019). Theorizations of social identity are essential in this analysis, as they concern how individuals derive part of their identity from their group memberships and how these women navigate such identities within the host culture and their communities (Scheepers et al., 2019). Women should be introduced to language and culture. Providing sensitization programs sensitively and delicately relevant to women's daily experiences is essential. Customizing language and cultural orientation to focus on practical language and cultural nuances will help women feel confident in their daily interactions and access to services. Workshops on local laws, employment rights, and educational opportunities should empower women to be self-sufficient and active in societal participation. Another vital practice is to develop community networks. Social, educational, and psychological service centers will help women create strong support bases. These centers could be safe spaces for women to share experiences and seek advice. This network could be encouraged through collaboration with local organizations and religious institutions to ensure that the support provided is culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of Arab immigrant women. This can be facilitated by providing easy access to both employment and education. Through job placement facilities, vocational training, and the recognition of foreign qualifications, economic activity will be accessible to women. Scholarships and educational grants would further foster the chances of higher education and, subsequently, entrance to long-term integration and personal development. Mentorship for a newly landed immigrant could be through established community members who would guide them and support them in the professional and academic landscape (Pérez-Varela et al., 2024).

Raising awareness about intercultural dialogue within host communities could also set the stage for better human relations. Celebration of cultural diversity through education and community events will be in a position to reduce prejudice by fostering mutual understanding. Participation in local volunteer programs to support immigrants will also provide real space for interacting with others and rid one of the cultural barriers, leading to a cohesive society (Ratzmann, 2019).

Methodology

Sample

The study involved 300 women from three European countries: 98 in Turkiye (32%), 118 in Bulgaria (39%), and 84 in England (28%). Among these women were Arab immigrants who had left their home countries to settle in Europe for various reasons. Some migrated for business purposes, some were refugees who fled the war searching for a peaceful place for their families, and some came to study in Europe and decided to work and stay there.

The sample consisted of the following demographics: women aged 18-25 (19%), 26-35 (18%), 36-45 (21%), 46-55 (19%), and over 55 (21%). Among them, 32% were married, 36% were single, and 31% were widowed. Additionally, 34% of the women wore hijabs, 35% wore the complete Muslim outfit, and 30% did not wear the hijab. Regarding children, 62% had no children, 11% had one child, 11% had two children, and 16% had three or four children. Regarding work status, 29% were employees, 32% were housewives, and 39% worked online. They differed in their years of experience at work as follows: 32% had no experience, 47% had 1-2 years of experience, and 21% had 3-5 years of experience in this study.

Method

The Cultural Competence Scale (SCAS) measures essential factors for adapting Arab immigrant women to the host country. The responses to the survey data, completed by Arab immigrant women in European countries, showed highly coherent correlations between three main factors (Cultural awareness and knowledge sensitivity, Interpersonal competence, and Survival competence) as measured by different dimensions of cultural competence in Table 4. The scale includes 23 items; respondents rate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).). The Factor analysis using Varimax rotation was made, and three factors were extracted; each factor comprises specific items that suggest the outputs of adolescent competencies and precursors required for optimal integration into the receiving society. The internal consistency coefficient, Cultural Competence Cronbach's ($\alpha=0.865$), indicates relatively high internal consistency.

Table1: Rotated Component Matrix (SCAS)

	Component		
	1	2	3
1. Making yourself understood	.160	.103	.386
2. Going shopping	.360	.487	.191
3. Going to social events/gatherings/functions	.449	.536	- .057
4. Worshipping in your usual way	.711	.119	.001
5. Talking about yourself with others	.669	.216	.003
6. Understanding jokes and humor	.423	- .043	.041
7. Dealing with someone unpleasant/cross/aggressive	.183	.536	- .056
8. Getting used to the local food/finding food you enjoy	.550	.090	.023
9. Following rules and regulations	.389	- .321	- .114
10. Dealing with people in authority	- .292	.024	.535
11. Adapting to local accommodation	.067	.367	- .047
12. communicating with people of a different ethnic group	.437	.330	- .037
13. Dealing with unsatisfactory service	.093	.285	- .554
14. Dealing with the climate	.182	- .199	- .253
15. Dealing with people staring at you	.352	.158	- .109
16. Going to coffee shops/food stalls/restaurants/fast food outlets	.297	.292	- .238
17. Understanding the local accent/language	.121	- .041	.570
18. Living away from family members overseas/independently from your parents	- .079	- .046	.341
19. Adapting to local etiquette	- .002	.479	- .162
20. Relating to older people	.055	.165	- .010
21. Accepting/understanding the local political system	.058	.479	- .086
22. Understanding the local value system	- .130	.266	- .309
23. Being able to see two sides of an intercultural issue	- .031	.578	.170

*1= Cultural awareness and knowledge sensitivity 2= Interpersonal competence 3= Survival competence

RESULTS

Differences by Work Status

Years of work experience can help Arab immigrant women develop successful cultural competence in their host country. As they spend more time in the country's environment and among its people, they gain more skills that lead to positive integration and competence in their host society.

Table 2. Differences in cultural competence /ANOVA by Work status

Descriptives					ANOVA			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Between Groups			
					Sum of Squares	Df	F	Sig.
Cultural awareness	Employee	37.3908	3.42140	.36681	37.322	2	.674	.511
	Housewife	37.3854	4.57998	.46744				
	working online	38.1111	6.71306	.62062				
	Total	37.6700	5.25737	.30353				
Interpersonal competence	Employee	21.3333	2.37069	.25416	2.297	2	.191	.827
	Housewife	21.4792	2.44079	.24911				
	working online	21.2735	2.52786	.23370				
	Total	21.3567	2.44870	.14138				
Survivalcomp etence	Employee	12.4713	1.65543	.17748	7.783	2	1.091	.337
	Housewife	12.3021	1.90909	.19485				
	working online	12.6838	2.02846	.18753				
	Total	12.5000	1.88906	.10907				
Cultural Competence	Employee	71.1954	5.56952	.59711	56.322	2	.532	.588
	Housewife	71.1667	7.14757	.72950				
	working online	72.0684	8.40436	.77698				
	Total	71.5267	7.26258	.41931				

In Table 2, the three means for cultural awareness are closely packed, as employees have a mean of 37.39 with a standard deviation of 3.42. In contrast, housewives have a mean of 37.39 with a standard deviation of 4.58,

and women working online have a higher mean of 38.11 with a standard deviation 6.71. This indicates no significance between the groups in the ANOVA test, with ($F = 0.674$ and $p = 0.511$), showing that work status does not significantly influence cultural awareness for these women.

Again, the scores for interpersonal competence were very similar. In this case, the employees have a mean of 21.33 with a standard deviation of 2.37, the housewife's mean is 21.48 with a standard deviation of 2.44, and the online workers have a mean score of 21.27 with a standard deviation of 2.53. The ANOVA yielded no significant difference between the groups ($F = 0.191$, $p = 0.827$). This implies that competence in effectively relating to people from other cultures does not vary based on work status.

The dimension of survival competence varied slightly more but still failed to return any significant difference. The employees' score was 12.47 with a standard deviation of 1.66, housewives scored 12.30 with a standard deviation of 1.91, and those working online scored 12.68 with a standard deviation 2.03. The findings of the ANOVA ($F = 1.091$, $p = 0.337$) show no significant differences in practical skills and knowledge of daily living in a new environment for the different categories regarding working status.

The average cultural competence score for workers was 71.20 ($SD = 5.57$), 71.17 for housewives ($SD = 7.15$), and 72.07 for interns ($SD = 8.40$). The ANOVA test showed no significant differences between these groups in the mentioned characteristics ($F = 0.532$, $p = 0.588$). This overall result reinforces the finding that work status does not substantially influence the cultural competence of Arab immigrant women in this study.

The results in Table 2 show no noteworthy difference in the variables of cultural competence, which includes cultural awareness, interpersonal competence, and survival competence, depending on the work status of Arab immigrant women working in Europe. This means that employed women, housewives, and online workers display very similar levels of cultural competence, probably due to other factors playing a more critical role in their adaptation to the culture of their host societies.

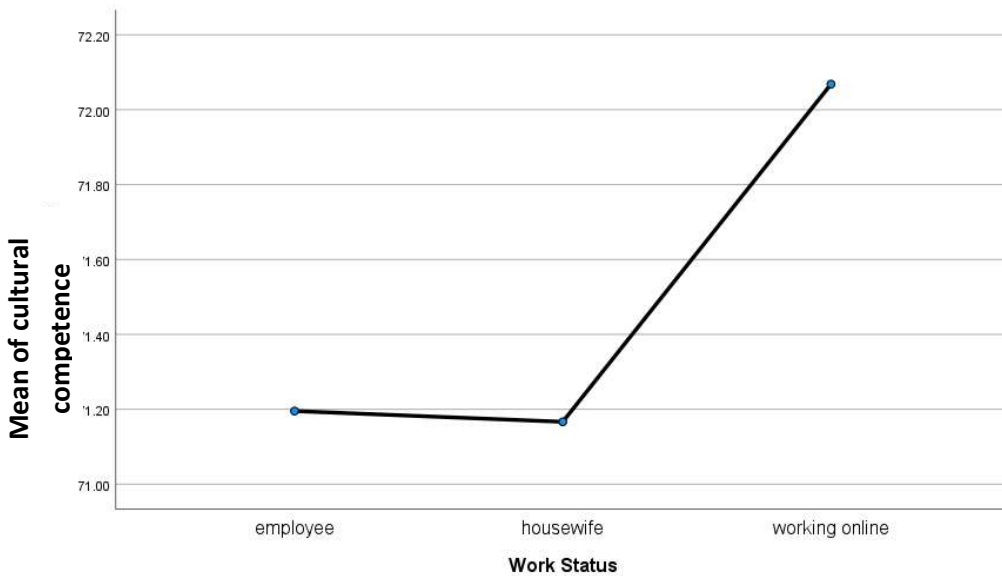


Figure 1: Impact of Cultural Awareness on Work Status

Figure 1 plots the relationship between "Work Status" and the "Mean of Cultural Competence." It explores that there may be some relationship between work status and cultural awareness, as indicated by the higher mean of cultural competence for those working online. Hence, they may have more cultural awareness compared to employees or housewives. This is likely because they frequently interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds through their work, and this cross-cultural interaction gradually enhances their cultural competence. Moreover, online work often demands strong communication skills in the local or English language, thereby prompting women to improve their language proficiency, ultimately contributing to their cultural competence.

Online work offers greater flexibility regarding work hours and location, allowing women to effectively balance work and family responsibilities. Additionally, online work might help to overcome some of the traditional barriers experienced by immigrants in the labor market, such as discrimination or the lack of recognition for foreign qualifications. Unlike housewives, who may experience more isolation, online workers engage in regular virtual interactions to mitigate feelings of isolation and facilitate cultural learning and competence in their host country.

Differences by Marital status

Being an Arab immigrant woman in Europe, whether married, single, or widowed, significantly impacts their cultural competence due to differing responsibilities in each case.

Table 3. Cultural Competence by Marital Status

Descriptives					ANOVA			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Between Groups			
					Sum of Squares	Df	F	Sig.
Cultural awareness	married	37.0722	4.36427	.44312	60.137	2	1.089	.338
	Single	37.7593	6.80828	.65513				
	widowed	38.1789	3.88116	.39820				
	Total	37.6700	5.25737	.30353				
Interpersonal competence	married	21.3299	2.56061	.25999	.293	2	.024	.976
	single	21.3981	2.39524	.23048				
	widowed	21.3368	2.41718	.24800				
	Total	21.3567	2.44870	.14138				
Survival competence	married	12.3093	2.08846	.21205	5.281	2	.739	.479
	single	12.5741	1.83529	.17660				
	widowed	12.6105	1.73386	.17789				
	Total	12.5000	1.88906	.10907				
Cultural competence	married	70.7113	7.77276	.78920	103.172	2	.978	.377
	single	71.7315	8.16719	.78589				
	widowed	72.1263	5.38959	.55296				
	Total	71.5267	7.26258	.41931				

In Table 3, the mean scores for cultural awareness were relatively close to one another based on the marital status groups. The mean score was 37.07 with a standard deviation of 4.36 for married women, 37.76 with a standard deviation of 6.81 for single women, and the highest mean score was 38.18 with a standard deviation of 3.88 for widowed. ANOVA results ($F = 1.089$, $p = 0.338$) indicated no significant difference between these groups; therefore, marital status does not significantly affect cultural awareness in these women.

Interpersonal competence scores of the three groups were very similar. The married women had a mean of 21.33, with a standard deviation of 2.56; the single women had a mean of 21.40, with a standard deviation of 2.40; and the widowed had a mean of 21.34, with a standard deviation of 2.42. The ANOVA results ($F = 0.024$, $p = 0.976$) show no significant differences in interpersonal competence based on marital status. This suggests consistent ability in the interactional domain, relating effectively with others regardless of marital status.

Again, the scores show slight variation and no significant differences in survival skills. The mean score of the married women is 12.31, with a standard deviation of 2.09; that of single women is 12.57, with a standard deviation of 1.84; and that of the widowed is 12.61, with a standard deviation of 1.73. The ANOVA result is ($F = 0.739$, $p = 0.479$). Therefore, their practical skills and knowledge for daily living are more or less similar.

There was some variation in the total cultural competence scores for the groups: The average for married women is 70.71 with a standard deviation of 7.77, the average for single women is 71.73 with a standard deviation of 8.17, and the highest average of 72.13 with a standard deviation of 5.39 for the widowed. ANOVA results ($F = 0.978$, $p = 0.377$) showed no significant differences in total cultural competence based on marital status.

This indicates no significant difference in mean cultural competence scores among Arab immigrant women in Europe based on marital status: married, single, or widowed with equal levels of cultural competence. This suggests that marital status does not determine their levels of cultural adjustment and integration into their host societies.

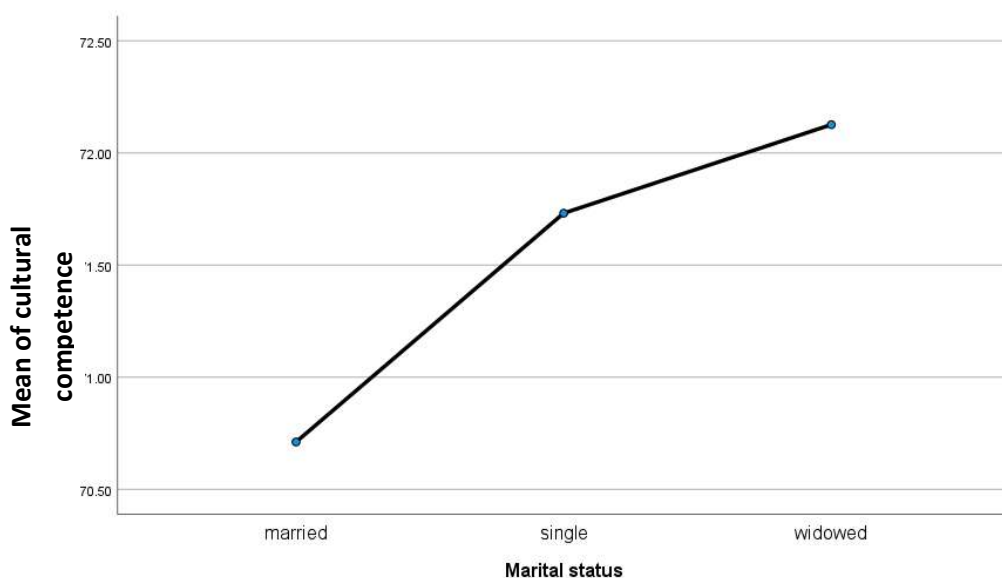


Figure 2: Impact of Cultural Awareness on Marital Status

Figure 2 shows the relation of marital status to the "Mean of cultural competence." The mean of cultural competence for the three groups is lowest for the married, higher for singles, and heist for the widowed. This relationship may provide evidence for its correlation between marital status and cultural

awareness. The cultural competence variable is much higher in the case of the Widowed, indicating more cultural awareness than the other two, married and single.

Differences by Motherhood Status

Motherhood status is a significant factor that influences the cultural competence of Arab immigrant women. Raising children is a substantial responsibility and places additional pressure on immigrant women, in addition to the stress of achieving success in the host country.

Table 4. Cultural Competence by Motherhood status

Descriptives					ANOVA			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Between Groups			
					Sum of Squares	Df	F	Sig.
Cultural awareness	Yes	37.2316	4.05928	.41647	26.722	1	.967	.326
	No	37.8732	5.72606	.39993				
	Total	37.6700	5.25737	.30353				
Interpersonal competence	Yes	21.1053	2.64766	.27164	8.787	1	1.468	.227
	No	21.4732	2.34845	.16402				
	Total	21.3567	2.44870	.14138				
Survival competence	Yes	12.4842	2.06729	.21210	.035	1	.010	.922
	No	12.5073	1.80582	.12612				
	Total	12.5000	1.88906	.10907				
Cultural competence	yes	70.8211	7.15628	.73422	69.219	1	1.314	.253
	No	71.8537	7.30552	.51024				
	Total	71.5267	7.26258	.41931				

Motherhood status is a significant factor that influences the cultural competence of Arab immigrant women. Raising children is a substantial responsibility and places additional pressure on immigrant women, in addition to the stress of achieving success in the host country.

From the ANOVA results in Table 20, the motherhood status shows that the cultural awareness and knowledge sensitivity variable has an ($F = .976$, with a significance level of 0.326. This means that, with $p > 0.05$), the difference regarding the Cultural awareness factor is not statistically significant.

In the Interpersonal Competence factor, the ($F\text{-value} = 1.468$, with a $p\text{-value}$ of 0.227). Thus, differences in interpersonal competencies across the three attire types are non-significant at ($p > 0.05$).

The ANOVA output analysis gives the $F\text{-statistic}$ for survival competence; the level of statistical significance is 0.337. This implies no

difference in survival competence across three types of attire per the statistical significance level ($p > 0.05$).

In Table 4, the means for cultural awareness were slightly different between mothers and non-mothers. For mothers, this mean is 37.23 with a standard deviation of 4.06, while that for the non-mothers is 37.87 with a standard deviation 5.73. Results obtained from ANOVA were non-significant ($F = 0.967$, $p = 0.326$). This may suggest that motherhood status has no significant effect on cultural awareness among these women.

In the case of Interpersonal Competence, the average for mothers was 21.11 with a standard deviation of 2.65, and, in the case of non-mothers, it was higher with an average of 21.47 and a standard deviation of 2.35. ANOVA results ($F = 1.468$, $p = 0.227$) express that no significant difference in Interpersonal Competence exists between mothers and non-mothers, thus proving that there is no variation in the ability to deal effectively with people in both groups.

The survival competence scores of the two groups were almost identical. The average score for the mothers was 12.48, with a standard deviation of 2.07, while that for the non-mothers was 12.51, with a standard deviation of 1.81. The results of the ANOVA test ($F = 0.010$, $p = 0.922$) show no significant differences in practical skills and knowledge for daily living based on whether one is a mother or not.

The overall cultural competence scores indicated some variation but no significant differences between the groups. On average, mothers scored 70.82, with a standard deviation of 7.16, and non-mothers indicated an average of 71.85, with a standard deviation of 7.31. In this respect, the result of the ANOVA is ($F = 1.314$, $p = 0.253$); there were no significant differences in overall cultural competence based on motherhood status.

No significant differences in cultural competence by motherhood status were found among the Arab immigrant women in Europe. The results show that the women tend to hold similar values regarding cultural competence, whether they are mothers or not, indicating that their motherhood status is not substantially concerned with cultural adaptation and integration into their host societies.

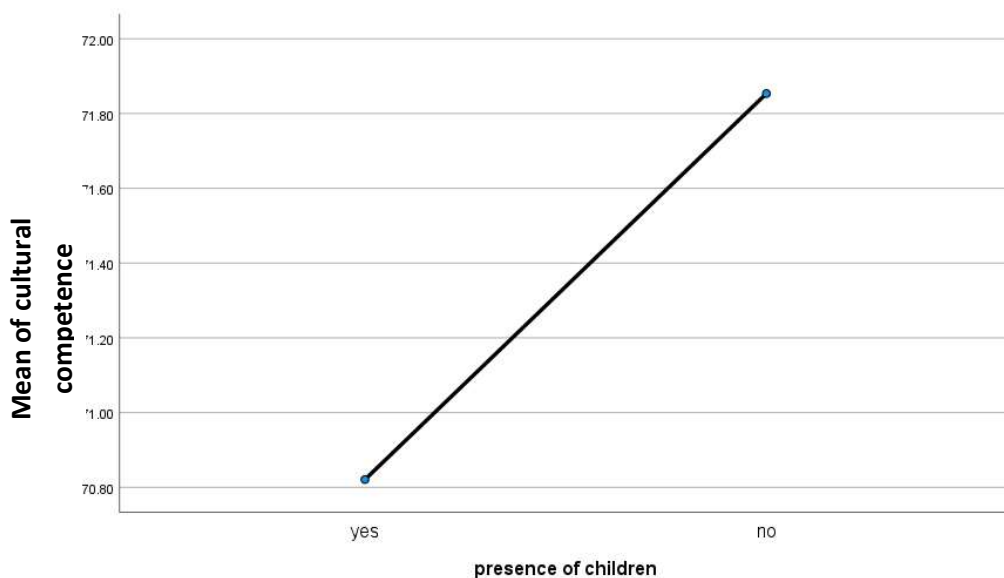


Figure 3: Impact of Cultural Awareness on the Presence of Children

Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between the presence of children and the "Mean of cultural competence." The mean of cultural competence for households with children is lower than for households without children. This would show a correlation between having children or not and having cultural awareness because the mean of cultural competence in the case of households without children is higher, which would depict more cultural awareness than the households with children.

Discussion

The results of the Cultural Competence Scale analysis provide a general idea of how different factors influenced the cultural competence of European Arab immigrant women. The critical dimensions of SCAS are cultural awareness, interpersonal, and survival competence. These factors demonstrate stable correlations within the survey data provided by the women; there are no significant differences related to work status, marital status, or motherhood status. This means that such demographic characteristics do not affect their general cultural competence. The results indicate that the mean scores for cultural awareness, interpersonal competence, and survival competence are similar for different statuses: employed women, housewives, and online workers. In this respect, the ANOVA results are not significant, thus showing that work status does not considerably affect cultural competence. This finding is further supported by literature suggesting other factors, such as education, length of stay, and legal status, which seem more essential in cultural adaptation (Eden et al., 2024). Although cultural awareness was slightly more

evident in online workers, this could reflect that online workers are exposed to many different cultures daily and must communicate adequately. It could even be stated that an online work environment may improve cultural competence by exposing workers to cultural contexts where linguistic skills are necessary (Pérez-Varela et al., 2024). Despite this, the insignificant differences underscore that work status alone does not strongly affect cultural competency. The results also indicate that marital status does not play any role in cultural awareness, interpersonal competence, and survival competence. There is no significant difference across these dimensions as manifested in the ANOVA results, hence portraying marital status as not playing a critical role in determining the cultural competence among these women. This finding supports the literature that states that, among other variables, educational attainment, duration of stay in the host country, and legal status are more powerful (Da Lomba & Sylvie, 2010). Therefore, marital status may not significantly affect cultural competence, for competencies measured are more likely to be influenced by things like social integration and access to resources than by personal relationship status. This result coincides with previous studies' emphasis on the role of broader socio-economic and educational factors in cultural adaptation (Eden et al., 2024). The results further indicated no significant difference in cultural competence based on motherhood status. In other words, whether the women are mothers does not significantly affect their cultural awareness, interpersonal competence, and survival competence. The literature supports this result that while motherhood may influence certain aspects of immigrant women's lives, it does not necessarily impact their cultural competence (Taha, 2019). However, the slightly higher cultural awareness of households without children may suggest additional responsibilities and possible isolation mothers face, influencing their possibilities to engage in cultural activities. However, there are no significant differences in terms of motherhood status, which indicates that this variable does not strongly influence cultural competence. The findings of this study reveal that work status, marital status, and motherhood status have no significant impact on the cultural competence of Arab immigrant women. Literature suggests that other factors, such as education, duration of stay, and legal status, are significant players in forming cultural competence. The findings highlight the need to focus on these broader factors when dealing with cultural integration and competence for immigrant populations.

Conclusion

In this study, the SCAS measured the level of the following three main dimensions: cultural awareness, interpersonal competence, and survival competence. There were no significant effects of work status, marital status, and motherhood status on the respondents' cultural competence level. There were no significant differences in whether they were employed, housewives, or online workers in their ratings of cultural awareness, interpersonal skills, and survival skills. The marital and motherhood status did not affect the different dimensions of cultural competence. The results give the impression that for Arab immigrant women in Europe, work status, marital status, motherhood, and other factors are not critical determinants of cultural competence. Alternatively, it could be that some other factors—like educational background, duration of stay in the host country, legal status, or resources—might be more determining in shaping their cultural adaptation and integration. This agrees with existing literature that emphasizes the impact of broader socio-economic and structural factors on cultural competence. These findings mean that education, socioeconomic status, and duration in residency must be considered when understanding the possible accomplishment of cultural competence. Moreover, such deeper dynamics have to be addressed by any policies or support programs devised to influence cultural integration if they are to become relevant, helpful, and practical for supporting the processes of adjustment for Arab immigrant women. Addressing these critical factors most effectively supports cultural and social integration among immigrant populations, contributing to more inclusive and harmonious societies.

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