



Intercultural Sensitivity Among In-Service Teachers in Greece: A Nationwide Survey Using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the intercultural sensitivity (IS) of in-service teachers in Greece by providing a nationwide profile across the five dimensions of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS). Addressing a gap in previous Greek research, which has largely focused on pre-service teachers, specific specializations, or geographically limited samples, the study investigates whether Greek teachers' intercultural sensitivity is balanced across dimensions and how selected demographic factors relate to their IS levels. Methodologically, the study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 409 in-service teachers working in primary and secondary education across all 13 administrative regions of Greece, using the ISS and a supplementary demographic questionnaire. The findings revealed that teachers reported a generally high level of overall intercultural sensitivity. However, the dimensional analysis indicated a clear values–confidence imbalance: participants scored highest on Respect for Cultural Differences but lowest on Interaction Confidence. This suggests that, although teachers demonstrate strong positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, they report comparatively lower confidence in managing intercultural interactions. Furthermore, postgraduate qualifications and non-urban residency were associated with higher levels of intercultural sensitivity, while other demographic variables showed more limited or inconsistent effects. The study concludes that Greek in-service teachers possess a strong affective foundation for intercultural education, but practical interactional confidence remains less developed. These findings imply that teacher training and professional development should move beyond reinforcing positive attitudes and place greater emphasis on experiential, skills-based approaches that strengthen teachers' confidence and effectiveness in culturally diverse classrooms.

Keywords: Intercultural Sensitivity, Schoolteachers, Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, Educational Diversity, Teacher Training

1. Introduction

In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, intercultural competence has become a fundamental professional attribute for educators. This competence extends beyond basic cultural awareness or factual knowledge of cultural differences; rather, it involves the capacity to communicate effectively, appropriately, and sensitively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Within this broader framework, intercultural sensitivity (IS) represents a central affective dimension, defined as an individual's ability to develop positive emotions toward understanding, respecting, and appreciating cultural differences (Chen & Starosta, 2000). This conceptualization is consistent with influential models of intercultural communicative competence, particularly those advanced by Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006), which emphasize that attitudes, openness, respect, and emotional readiness constitute essential foundations for effective intercultural behavior. Therefore, teachers are expected not only to possess intercultural knowledge but also to demonstrate the sensitivity and confidence required to respond constructively to culturally diverse classroom realities.

In Greece, growing social and ethnic diversity in classrooms presents both valuable opportunities and significant challenges for inclusion, thereby placing increasing intercultural and social demands on teachers (Chranioti & Arvanitis, 2018; Palaiologou & Dimitriadou, 2013). As a result, teachers' intercultural sensitivity has become a crucial factor in supporting inclusive classroom interaction, reducing cultural misunderstandings, and promoting equitable learning experiences. Although the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) has been widely applied to assess teacher readiness across international contexts, from North America to Sub-Saharan Africa, the specific profile of Greek teachers, who work within a highly centralized education system, remains under-researched (Palaiologou & Dimitriadou, 2013). This gap is particularly important because Greek teachers work within a highly centralized education system, where national policies, curricula, and teacher training structures may shape intercultural preparedness in distinctive ways. Previous Greek research has focused primarily on pre-service teachers, specific specializations, or limited geographical areas (Chranioti & Arvanitis, 2018; Spinthourakis et al., 2009; Chranioti & Arvanitis, 2018). Consequently, a comprehensive nationwide study exploring in-service practitioners across all disciplines addresses an important gap in the literature. To clarify the context, in-service teachers are professionals currently employed in schools and engaged in ongoing professional development, whereas pre-service teachers are university students enrolled in teacher education programs before entering the profession. Therefore, empirical evidence from in-service teachers is essential for designing effective teacher training programs and informing national policy on intercultural education.

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The present study was designed to address three central research questions regarding the intercultural sensitivity of Greek teachers. The first research question aims to identify the specific IS profile of Greek in-service teachers across the five dimensions of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. The second research question seeks to determine whether statistically significant differences exist among these five IS dimensions, in order to assess whether teachers' intercultural sensitivity is balanced or imbalanced. Finally, the third research question investigates how selected demographic variables, including gender, age, residency, and postgraduate qualifications, relate to both teachers' overall intercultural sensitivity and their performance within specific interactional dimensions. In this way, the study contributes to the literature on intercultural education by providing nationwide empirical evidence on Greek in-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity and by identifying areas that may require further attention in teacher education and professional development. In practical terms, the findings may inform teacher education, professional development, and national policy by identifying whether training should move beyond general awareness-raising and place greater emphasis on practical intercultural communication skills, classroom confidence, and reflective professional practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Intercultural Competence (IC) is a multidimensional process involving attitudes, knowledge, and skills. To understand the theoretical parameters of this construct, it is essential to situate it within an overarching model. This is the model of the Intercultural Triad, which categorizes competence into cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Spitzberg, 2000). Within this framework, the cognitive domain, also termed Intercultural Awareness, involves the internal transformation of an individual's understanding of the conventions and characteristics of both their own and other cultures. The behavioral domain, or Intercultural Adroitness, focuses on the practical execution of communication goals and on the ability to act effectively and appropriately in diverse settings (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Intercultural Sensitivity (IS) is the distinct affective pillar of the aforementioned triad, serving as the emotional driving force that enables the transition from theoretical knowledge to effective practice. This affective domain is not an isolated characteristic, but a sophisticated psychological process of emotional regulation. Within the teaching profession, this affective sensitivity determines whether an educator will engage a culturally diverse student with openness or withdraw. Across influential theoretical frameworks, including those by Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006, 2009), a clear consensus emerges: the cognitive and behavioral domains are ineffective without a strong affective foundation.

While Bennett's (1986, 2017) Developmental Model, enhanced by Hammer et al. (2003), views IS as a progression of worldviews, this study adopts Chen and Starosta's (1998, 2000) definition: the "ability to develop positive emotions towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences". This perspective aligns with scholars (e.g., Popović 2019; Spithourakis et al. 2009) who view IS as the vital affective foundation for educators. To measure this construct, Chen and Starosta (2000) developed the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS). The ISS has been extensively applied in education (Spithourakis et al. 2009; Peng 2006; Wu 2015) and diverse fields, including healthcare, leadership, and conflict resolution (Kaihlainen et al. 2019; Bhavuk & Sakuda 2009; Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee 2002). Research consistently links ISS scores to constructs like empathy and cultural intelligence.

The ISS was designed to assess five dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. First, Interaction Engagement (D1) refers to a participant's willingness to engage in intercultural encounters, a characteristic that Deardorff (2006) identifies as crucial for moving beyond passive awareness. Second, Respect for Cultural Differences (D2), involves a positive orientation toward diversity, aligning with the concept of *savoir être* or "intercultural attitudes" (Byram 1997). Third, Interaction Confidence (D3), describes the self-assurance required to manage misunderstandings effectively during communication. Fourth, Interaction Enjoyment (D4) represents the positive emotional response to cultural difference, which facilitates the building of meaningful relationships (Mahoney & Chamber, 2004). Finally, Interaction Attentiveness (D5) denotes the ability to perceive and interpret cultural cues correctly, a key interpretive skill in diverse settings (Fantini 2009; López-Rocha 2016).

While alternative instruments such as the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) (Hammer et al. 2003; Bennett 2017) or the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) (Ang et al. 2007) exist, they were not selected for this study as they focus on longitudinal developmental shifts or metacognitive capabilities rather than the immediate affective readiness of the practitioner. Because this nationwide survey specifically aims to capture the cross-sectional, affective readiness of Greek teachers, specifically their emotional responses, respect, and interactional confidence, the ISS emerged as the preferred instrument. Unlike the IDI or CQS, the ISS explicitly isolates and quantifies this affective domain (Chen & Starosta, 2000), which is the precise emotional foundation required to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice.

2.2. Empirical Studies

2.2.1. Teacher Intercultural Sensitivity: Global, European, And Greek Contexts

The necessity for teachers to possess intercultural sensitivity is underscored by the growing cultural diversity resulting from global migration. Empirical research demonstrates that interculturally sensitive teachers utilize more adaptive practices, directly improving student motivation and academic outcomes (Spithourakis et al. 2009; Popović 2019). This is particularly important when working with students from refugee or migrant backgrounds, where teacher sensitivity significantly impacts adjustment and progress (Strekalova-Hughes 2017; Biasutti et al. 2020).

A synthesis of recent empirical research reveals a consistent but complex pattern: while educators generally report moderate-to-high overall intercultural sensitivity, their internal competence profiles are frequently uneven. Studies across diverse educational contexts, ranging from language teachers in Turkey and Algeria (Tuncel & Paker, 2018; Boudouaia et al., 2022; Akcin, 2023) to educators serving immigrant populations in Chile (Sanhueza et al., 2017), demonstrate that teachers are highly willing to embrace diversity. However, a deeper critical theme emerges when examining specific dimensions: the "values-behavior gap." Research from multicultural European regions (Zorman & Zudič Antonič, 2019), the United States (Clark, 2022), and South Africa (Hanass-Hancock et al., 2014) consistently indicates that high attitudinal respect for cultural differences is often accompanied by significantly lower interactional confidence. This suggests a systemic issue where educators desire to be inclusive but perceive current professional development as insufficient for building the practical self-

efficacy needed to navigate complex interactions (Clark 2022; Ichikawa & Kim 2025). Importantly, comparisons across these studies must be made with caution due to the use of varying theoretical frameworks (e.g., Bennett's DMIS versus Chen and Starosta's ISS), highlighting the need for standardized measurement within specific national contexts.

Within Greece, research has gradually expanded. Foundational work assessed pre-service teachers and curriculum challenges (Spithourakis et al. 2009; Palaiologou & Dimitriadou 2013), while more recent focus has shifted to in-service primary teachers, generally finding satisfactory IS levels across diverse educational settings (Chranioti & Arvanitis 2018; Gedik Bal 2023). A study of in-service Greek EFL teachers by Karras and Themelis (2025) mirrored broader European trends, finding high respect but lower confidence and attentiveness. Collectively, these international and local findings suggest that teacher interculturality is rarely uniform. The recurrent observation of a “values-behavior gap”, where high attitudinal respect masks lower interactional confidence, forms the direct theoretical rationale for Research Questions 1 and 2 of the present study. Rather than assuming broad competence, it is highly relevant to synthesize these regional observations and examine the specific dimensional imbalances within the Greek teaching population nationwide to determine if this exact systemic gap persists at a macro level.

2.2.2. Factors Influencing Teacher Intercultural Sensitivity

To design effective pedagogical interventions, it is necessary to understand the specific demographic and professional factors that influence IS. A critical review of the literature reveals that formal education and specialized training are widely recognized as significant enhancers. Specifically, targeted intercultural communication courses consistently yield positive developmental impacts across diverse cohorts, benefiting both pre-service (Tuncel & Paker, 2018) and in-service practitioners (Akcin, 2023; Boudouaia et al., 2022). Within the Greek educational landscape, the specific pedagogical design and content of these courses are emphasized as foundational requirements for cultivating genuine affective sensitivity (Palaiologou & Dimitriadou, 2013).

However, the influence of practical teaching experience presents a much more complex narrative. While highly concentrated exposure, such as dealing with the specific challenges of working with refugee children, confirms and accelerates IS development (Strekalova-Hughes 2017), the impact of general classroom tenure remains statistically inconsistent. For instance, while some localized studies identify a positive correlation between years of service and IS (Zorman & Zudič Antonič, 2019), others report no such longitudinal benefit (Boudouaia et al., 2022). This theoretical contradiction suggests that the qualitative depth of intercultural contact, rather than the mere chronological duration of a teaching career, is the primary determinant of sensitivity.

This lack of consensus extends deeply into the analysis of socio-demographic variables, where the literature frequently offers directly contradictory evidence. Gender, for example, functions as a highly significant predictor of sensitivity in certain regional contexts (Boudouaia et al. 2022), yet demonstrates zero statistical relevance in culturally distinct educational systems such as Croatia (Drandić 2016) or Chile (Sanhueza et al. 2017). Similar empirical contradictions surround age and academic qualifications. While international analyses often highlight age and advanced educational training as robust positive influences on specific IS dimensions (Segura-Robles & Parra-González, 2019), opposing frameworks argue these factors have a negligible overall impact (Gedik Bal, 2023). Even within the localized Greek context, recent findings introduce further contradictions; Karras and Themelis (2025) reported that while older, experienced teachers displayed heightened sensitivity on select items, their possession of postgraduate degrees failed to yield any significant systemic advantage.

Rather than establishing a clear consensus, the existing literature reveals profound contradictions regarding how socio-demographic variables impact teacher sensitivity. As noted, variables such as gender, age, and qualifications are significant predictors in some localized contexts but irrelevant in others. This fragmented evidence base highlights a critical methodological gap: smaller, localized studies are highly susceptible to contextual bias. Consequently, this highlights the empirical need for Research Question 3. A comprehensive, nationwide survey is the only methodologically sound way to synthesize these contradictions and determine which demographic factors genuinely and consistently influence educators' intercultural sensitivity across the system as a whole.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

This study employed a quantitative, correlational cross-sectional survey design. The sample consisted of 409 in-service teachers (Table 1) who were actively teaching at the primary or secondary level across all 13 administrative regions of Greece. Participants were recruited between January and March 2025 using a non-probability, voluntary-response sampling method. Specifically, the Ministry of Education emailed an official call for participation to the regional educational directorates, which included a link to an anonymous Google Form containing a consent form. These directorates then forwarded the email to all schools within their jurisdiction, where school principals used their discretion to distribute the call to their teaching staff. Participation was entirely voluntary and completely anonymous. The sole inclusion criterion was being an actively employed educator at the school (including school principals, as they also maintain teaching duties). Because the survey's distribution relied on the cascading forwarding of an open link, the exact number of teachers who ultimately received or viewed the invitation is unknown; consequently, a traditional response rate cannot be calculated. Nevertheless, this strategy yielded a robust, geographically diverse sample of 409 valid responses. The detailed demographic stratification of the sample is presented in Table 1.

3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) developed by Chen and Starosta (2000). For the purposes of this study, the instrument was administered in Greek, utilizing a previously translated and validated Greek-language version of the scale that has been established and successfully employed in prior research within the Greek educational context (e.g., Spithourakis et al. 2009; Chranioti & Arvanitis 2018). Utilizing this established version ensures high linguistic and cultural equivalence without the need for secondary back-translation. The ISS is a 24-item instrument (Table 2) utilizing a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with nine items reverse-coded for analysis. For better statistical handling, nine items (2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22) are reverse-coded so that higher numerical scores consistently reflect a

higher level of intercultural sensitivity. This means that for these negatively-worded items, the raw scores are mathematically inverted (e.g., a response of 1 becomes a 5) so that all items contribute in the same direction to the final score.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the participants (n=409) and Descriptive statistics (Mean ISS scores and Standard Deviations) by demographic group.

No.	Factor	Category	n	%	Mean ISS score	SD
1	Gender	Male	66	16.1	4.03	0.53
		Female	341	83.4	4.07	0.45
2	Age	20s & 30s	66	16.1	4.08	0.53
		40s & 50s	313	76.5	4.07	0.45
		60s	30	7.3	4.04	0.50
3	Urbanity	Urban	325	79.5	4.07	0.47
		Non-urban	84	20.5	4.17	0.44
4	Postgraduate studies	Yes	312	76.3	4.09	0.46
		No	97	23.7	3.99	0.47
5	Experience	0-2 years	18	4.4	4.04	0.70
		3-10 years	80	19.6	4.11	0.45
		more than 10 years	311	76.0	4.06	0.45
6	Specialty	Physical Education	4	1.0	4.17	0.49
		Primary Education teacher	60	15.5	4.21	0.44
		Science & Mathematics	16	4.1	4.35	0.32
		Arts	4	1.0	3.83	0.52
		Foreign languages	236	60.8	4.07	0.52
		Computer Science & Technology	12	3.1	3.83	0.72
		Humanities	48	12.4	4.04	0.46
7	Educational level	Social Sciences	8	2.1	4.09	0.49
		Primary Education	128	31.3	4.08	0.42
		Secondary Education	243	59.4	4.06	0.49
8	Region	Eastern Macedonia & Thrace	35	8.6	4.06	0.56
		Attica	122	29.8	4.04	0.50
		Northern Aegean	5	1.2	3.78	0.24
		Western Greece	38	9.3	4.16	0.36
		Western Macedonia	9	2.2	3.97	0.42
		Epirus	5	1.2	4.14	0.63
		Thessaly	30	7.3	4.13	0.40
		Ionian islands	13	3.2	3.93	0.45
		Central Macedonia	74	18.1	4.03	0.39
		Crete	19	4.6	4.14	0.59
		Southern Aegean	12	2.9	4.04	0.44
Peloponnese	13	3.2	4.32	0.44		
Central Greece	34	8.3	4.09	0.49		

Source: Created by the authors.

Table 2: The ISS questionnaire.

#	Item (question)	Reverse-coded questions	ISS Dimension
1	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures		1
2	I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded	•	2
3	I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures		3
4	I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures	•	3
5	I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures		3
6	I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures		3
7	I don't like to be with people from different cultures	•	2
8	I respect the values of people from different cultures		2
9	I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures	•	4
10	I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures		3
11	I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts		1
12	I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures	•	4
13	I am open-minded to people from different cultures		1
14	I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures		5
15	I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures	•	4
16	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave		2
17	I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures		5
18	I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures	•	2

#	Item (question)	Reverse-coded questions	ISS Dimension
19	I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction		5
20	I think my culture is better than other cultures	•	2
21	I often give positive responses to my culturally-different counterpart during our interaction		1
22	I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons	•	1
23	I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues		1
24	I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me		1

Source: Created by the authors.

A supplementary questionnaire collected data on eight demographic variables (see Table 3). Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for both the full 24-item scale and its five individual subscales. The overall ISS demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.906$), which is highly acceptable and aligns with the robust values reported in foundational validation studies (Chen & Starosta, 2000). At the subscale level, three dimensions demonstrated acceptable-to-good reliability ($\alpha = .76-.81$). However, Interaction Enjoyment ($\alpha = .66$) and Interaction Attentiveness ($\alpha = .64$) fell just below the traditional .70 threshold. It should be noted that this specific variability is highly consistent with previous international validation studies (e.g., Fritz et al. 2002; Wang & Zhou 2016), which frequently report lower alphas for these exact two dimensions. Nevertheless, because these subscales fell below the strict acceptable threshold, explicit interpretive caution is applied throughout this study; findings derived exclusively from these two dimensions are treated as indicative rather than definitive.

Table 3: The 8 demographic factors of the survey.

#	Question	Possible answers
1	Your gender	male; female; prefer not to say
2	Your age band	in my 20s or 30s; in my 40s, 50s; in my 60s
3	Where have you lived most of your life?	in an urban area; in a non-urban area
4	Do you hold a second or Master's university degree (in any field)?	yes; no
5	How many years of experience do you have?	0-2; 3-10; more than 10
6	Which is your teaching specialty?	Arts; Foreign Languages; Humanities; Physical Education; Primary school teacher; Science & Mathematics; Technology & IT; prefer not to say
7	At which educational level do you teach?	Pre-primary or Primary; Secondary or Post-secondary
8	Which administrative region do you come from?	Attica; Central Greece; Central Macedonia; Crete; Eastern Macedonia & Thrace; Epirus; Ionian islands; Northern Aegean; Peloponnese; Southern Aegean; Thessaly; Western Greece; Western Macedonia

Source: Created by the authors.

3.3. Data Analysis

After the digital instrument was disseminated, participants provided informed consent, and all data were handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS Version 27. Prior to conducting inferential statistics, fundamental assumptions were evaluated. Normality was reasonably assumed given the large sample size ($N=409$). Homogeneity of variances was assessed using Levene's test (consulting Welch's robust F for violations), and homogeneity of covariance was evaluated via Box's M test. In repeated-measures designs, Mauchly's test assessed sphericity, and the Greenhouse-Geisser correction adjusted degrees of freedom when sphericity was violated. After re-scoring reverse-coded items, descriptive statistics were computed. To mitigate the risk of inflated Type I error, we conducted omnibus Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVAs) prior to examining individual item-level effects. Inferential analyses included within-subjects repeated measures ANOVAs with systematic Bonferroni post-hoc tests to examine differences among ISS questions and dimensions, and a series of between-subjects one-way ANOVAs to assess the relationship between demographic variables and IS scores (see Table 4 and Table 5). To evaluate practical significance alongside statistical significance, effect sizes (partial eta squared) η_p^2 were calculated. An a priori power analysis confirmed that the sample size was sufficient to detect statistically significant effects (minimum $N = 252$ required for a medium effect size of $f = 0.25$, $\alpha = .05$, and 95% power; achieved $N = 409$).

Table 4: Effects of demographic factors on ISS Questions & Dimensions (ANOVA tests).

Factor	ISS items	F value	df	Significance ($p \leq .05$)	Partial eta squared (η_p^2)	observed power (1- β)
1. Gender	24 Questions	1.177	48	0.19	0.07	0.99
	5 Dimensions	1.845	10	0.05	0.02	0.85
2. Age	24 Questions	1.311	48	0.08	0.08	0.99
	5 Dimensions	1.829	10	0.05	0.02	0.85

Factor	ISS items	F value	df	Significance (p ≤ 0.05)	Partial eta squared (η_p^2)	observed power (1-β)
3. Urbanity	24 Questions	1.191	24	0.25	0.07	0.89
	5 Dimensions	2.440	5	0.03	0.03	0.77
4. Postgraduate studies	24 Questions	1.604	24	0.04	0.09	0.97
	5 Dimensions	0.904	5	0.48	0.01	0.32
5. Experience	24 Questions	1.035	48	0.41	0.06	0.98
	5 Dimensions	1.165	10	0.31	0.01	0.61
6. Specialty	24 Questions	1.112	168	0.19	0.27	1
	5 Dimensions	0.984	35	0.53	0.07	0.9
7. Educational level	24 Questions	1.058	24	0.39	0.07	0.84
	5 Dimensions	0.337	5	0.89	0.01	0.14
8. Region	24 Questions	1.005	288	0.47	0.06	1
	5 Dimensions	1.168	60	0.18	0.03	0.99

Source: Created by the authors.

Table 5: Demographic effects on ISS Questions and Dimensions: significance ($p \leq 0.05$) (ANOVA tests; blank cells indicate non-significant effect).

ISS item	Gender	Age	Urbanity	Postgraduate studies	Experience	Specialty	Educational level	Region
I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures 1						.017		
I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded 2						.009		
I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures 3			.026					
I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures 4								
I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures 5								
I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures 6								
I don't like to be with people from different cultures 7								
I respect the values of people from different cultures 8								
I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures 9								
I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures 10								
I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts 11	.033 ¹							
I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures 12					.024 ¹			
I am open-minded to people from different cultures 13				.039				.016
I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures 14	.037							
I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures 15								
I respect the ways people from different cultures behave 16						.037		.032 ¹
I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures 17								
I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures 18								
I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction 19				.013				
I think my culture is better than other cultures 20	.05			.016				
I often give positive responses to my culturally-different counterpart during our interaction 21			.03					
I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons 22				.026				
I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues								

	ISS item	Gender	Age	Urbanity	Postgraduate studies	Experience	Specialty	Educational level	Region
Dimension	23			.017					
		I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me							
	24		.02 ¹	.001	.023				.046
		Interaction Engagement							
	1		.003	.018			.048		
		Respect for Cultural Differences							
	2		.05						
		Interaction Confidence							
	3								
		Interaction Enjoyment							
4									
	Interaction Attentiveness								
5									

Source: Created by the authors.

4. Results

4.1. Main ISS Scores: Item And Dimensional Analysis

4.1.1. Data Preparation And Interpretation Guide

Prior to the descriptive analysis, the data were screened, and reverse-coded items were inverted following the ISS scoring protocol (see Section 3.2) to ensure consistency in the calculated mean scores. This includes the nine reverse-coded items, which have been inverted so that a high mean reflects a positive intercultural characteristic (e.g., a high score on a reverse-coded item regarding “discouragement” actually indicates a lack of discouragement). To interpret these results, note that all mean scores (M) are presented on a uniform 1-5 scale, where a score closer to 5.00 consistently indicates a higher level of intercultural sensitivity. Furthermore, the Standard Deviation (SD) provides a measure of consensus among the sample; a lower SD suggests shared sensitivity levels, while a higher SD reflects a greater diversity of attitudes.

4.1.2. Comparison Of Individual ISS Items

The analysis of the 24 individual items revealed that while Greek school teachers generally report high levels of intercultural sensitivity, there is considerable variation across specific aspects of their competence. As shown in Table 6, the mean scores spanned a substantial range of the effective scale (32%).

Table 6: ISS Questions & Dimensions scores (Likert scale: 1-5; with Standard Deviation-SD) and post-hoc pairwise comparisons (repeated measures ANOVA tests).

	ISS item	Mean	SD	Post-hoc pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni; p<.05)
Question	1	4.37	0.74	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 ¹ , 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
	2	4.40	0.82	3, 4, 5, 6, 8 ¹ , 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
	3	3.77	0.91	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 ¹ , 16, 17, 18, 19 ¹ , 21 ¹ , 22, 23
	4	4.07	0.96	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 ¹ , 15 ¹ , 16 ¹ , 18, 21, 24
	5	3.29	0.93	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
	6	3.67	0.93	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 ¹ , 22, 23
	7	4.44	0.83	3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17 ¹ , 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
	8	4.57	0.59	1, 2 ¹ , 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
	9	4.55	0.76	1 ¹ , 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 ¹ , 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
	10	3.77	0.85	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 ¹ , 16, 17, 18, 19, 21 ¹ , 22, 23
	11	4.11	0.81	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 ¹ , 15, 16 ¹ , 18, 21, 24
	12	4.08	0.92	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16 ¹ , 18, 21, 24
	13	4.30	0.72	3, 4 ¹ , 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 ¹ , 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24
	14	3.97	0.82	1, 2, 3 ¹ , 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 ¹ , 13, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24
	15	3.86	0.85	1, 2, 4 ¹ , 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23
	16	4.29	0.74	3, 4 ¹ , 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 ¹ , 12 ¹ , 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23 ¹ , 24
	17	4.27	0.72	3, 5, 6, 7 ¹ , 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23 ¹ , 24
	18	4.38	0.80	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 ¹ , 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24
	19	3.99	0.77	1, 2, 3 ¹ , 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24
	20	3.95	0.98	1, 2, 5, 6 ¹ , 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24 ¹
	21	3.57	0.77	1, 2, 3 ¹ , 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 ¹ , 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23
	22	4.14	0.92	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 21, 24
	23	4.12	0.68	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16 ¹ , 17 ¹ , 18, 21, 24
	24	3.71	0.92	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 ¹ , 22, 23
Dimension	1	4.05	0.51	2, 3, 4
	2	4.34	0.57	1, 3, 4, 5
	3	3.71	0.68	1, 2, 4, 5
	4	4.16	0.65	1, 2, 3
	5	4.08	0.59	2, 3

Source: Created by the authors.

A detailed examination of Table 6 reveals that these item-specific variations are not random; they align systematically with the five dimensions of the ISS, suggesting that teacher competence is rather multidimensional. A thematic analysis of the individual items reveals a consistent disparity between teachers' high intercultural values and their lower confidence in communicative performance. The highest mean scores were clustered around items reflecting attitudinal respect and emotional regulation, such as Q8 ("I respect the values of people from different cultures"; $M = 4.57$) and Q9 ("I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures"; $M = 4.55$). These results indicate a strong, widely shared endorsement of cultural diversity. In sharp contrast, items requiring spontaneous communicative confidence and active engagement yielded the lowest scores, particularly Q5 ("I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures"; $M = 3.29$) and Q21 ("I often give positive responses..."; $M = 3.57$). This pattern identifies a clear developmental imbalance: while the desire for intercultural sensitivity is strong, the practical self-efficacy required for confident action remains less developed.

This interpretation is reinforced by the distribution of variances. As shown in Table 6, items related to fundamental values, such as respect (Q8), had low standard deviations ($SD = 0.59$), indicating strong consensus among participants. Conversely, higher variances were observed for items related to communication confidence (Q5; $SD = 0.93$) and ethnocentric views (Q20; $SD = 0.98$), indicating that teachers' perspectives on their own communicative efficacy and cultural superiority are far more divergent. The higher variance in Q20 is noteworthy, as it suggests that although the national average is high, there remains a part of the population with more divided views on cultural hierarchy. To assess whether the same teachers scored differently across intercultural traits, a within-subjects repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted. This confirmed that the differences in mean scores across the 24 items were statistically significant ($F = 89.47$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.18$), indicating a moderate practical effect size. The contrasts are visualized in Figure 1.

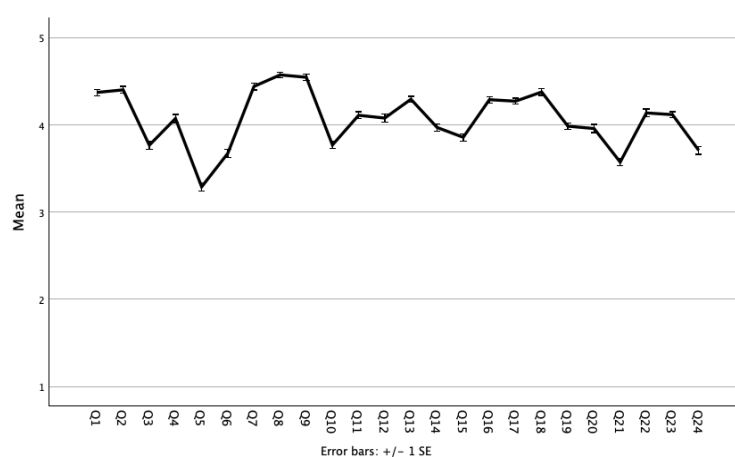


Figure 1: The means of the 24 ISS Questions. Source: Created by the authors.

4.1.3. Evaluation of the 5 ISS Dimensions

To provide a comprehensive profile, the 24 items were aggregated into the five conceptual dimensions defined by Chen and Starosta (2000) (see Table 6). A repeated-measures ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences across these dimensions ($F(4, 115.04) = 115.04$, $p < .001$), with a substantial effect size (partial $\eta^2 = 0.22$).

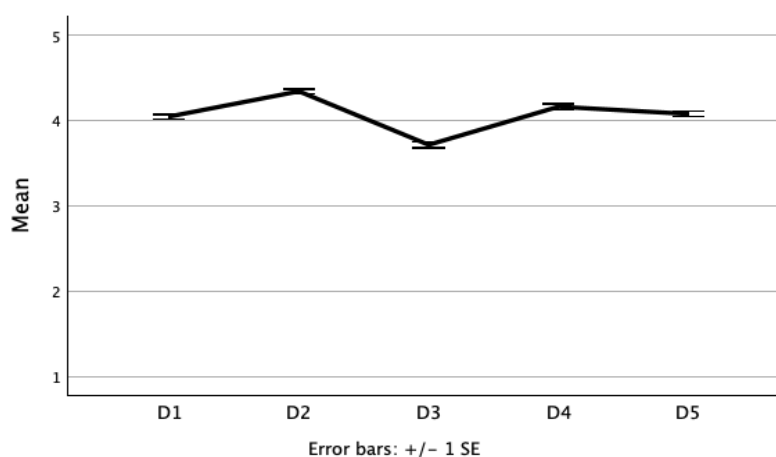


Figure 2: The means of the 5 ISS Dimensions. Source: Created by the authors.

As shown in Figure 2, the results reveal a distinct sensitivity profile. The dimension with the highest mean score was Dimension 2: Respect for Cultural Differences ($M = 4.34$), reflecting a strong attitudinal foundation. Following this were Dimension 4: Interaction Enjoyment ($M = 4.16$) and Dimension 1: Interaction Engagement ($M = 4.05$). The lowest mean score was consistently found for Dimension 3: Interaction Confidence ($M = 3.71$), indicating a comparatively lower level of perceived self-efficacy in intercultural situations. Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons confirmed the statistical significance of this pattern: Respect for Cultural Differences scored significantly higher than all other dimensions, while Interaction Confidence scored significantly lower than the rest. This structural imbalance confirms that Greek teachers' intercultural sensitivity is currently anchored more in values than in interactional confidence.

4.2. Effects of Demographic Factors

4.2.1. Overview

The analysis revealed that several factors had a statistically significant overall effect. When the five ISS dimensions were considered as a set, gender ($p=.05$), age ($p=.05$), and urbanity ($p=.03$) all demonstrated significant relationships. Furthermore, postgraduate qualifications showed a statistically significant effect when the 24 ISS items were analyzed collectively ($p = .04$). In contrast, overall ANOVA tests for teaching experience, specialty, educational level, and region did not yield statistically significant broad effects, although isolated item-level differences were observed.

4.2.2. Analysis of Individual Demographic Factors

a. Gender

The analysis of gender revealed complex patterns. Descriptive statistics indicated minimal practical difference between the mean overall ISS scores of male teachers ($M=4.03$, $SD=0.53$) and female teachers ($M=4.07$, $SD=0.45$). However, inferential analysis uncovered statistically significant underlying effects. The overall ANOVA conducted on the five ISS dimensions as a set was statistically significant. Furthermore, fine-grained item-level tests identified a specific significant difference on Q14 (Interaction Attentiveness). In this instance, male teachers scored significantly higher than their female colleagues ($p = .037$), indicating stronger self-reported observational and responsive behaviors during intercultural interactions. These findings suggest that while gender is not a broad predictor of overall sensitivity in this sample, it may subtly influence how specific aspects of interaction are perceived and reported.

b. Age

The examination of age-related differences showed that while mean overall scores were comparable across teachers in their 20s-30s, 40s-50s, and 60s, a statistically significant effect emerged when the five ISS dimensions were analyzed collectively. Further investigation at the item level revealed that younger teachers (20s-30s) reported significantly higher scores on Q24 (related to Interaction Enjoyment) compared to their mid-career colleagues. This suggests that younger educators may derive greater pleasure from intercultural variation. However, these results suggest age has a subtle rather than a dominant influence, and findings should be interpreted cautiously given that the sample was heavily skewed towards the 40s-50s age range (76.5%).

c. Urbanity

The analysis of urban versus non-urban residency revealed distinct and statistically significant patterns, with teachers from non-urban areas reporting higher intercultural sensitivity (IS) on several key measures. Descriptive statistics showed that teachers from non-urban areas had a higher mean overall ISS score ($M = 4.17$) compared to their urban counterparts ($M = 4.07$). This difference was confirmed as statistically significant when analyzing the five ISS dimensions collectively ($p=.03$). Item-level analyses further highlighted this trend, showing that non-urban teachers scored significantly higher on items related to Interaction Confidence (Q3; $p=.026$) and especially Interaction Engagement (Q24, $p=.001$) as well as on Dimension 1 overall ($p=.018$). These findings are particularly noteworthy given the sample's skew towards urban teachers (79.5%).

d. Postgraduate qualifications

An analysis of formal education levels revealed that teachers holding advanced degrees reported higher IS on several measures. Teachers with postgraduate qualifications had a higher mean overall ISS score than those with only a bachelor's degree ($M = 4.09$ vs. $M = 3.99$). This effect was statistically significant across the 24 ISS items collectively ($p = .04$). A detailed item-level analysis showed that these teachers scored significantly higher on specific items related to open-mindedness (Q13), Interaction Attentiveness (Q19), Respect for Cultural Differences (Q20), and Interaction Engagement (Q22 and Q24). These results suggest a positive association between postgraduate qualifications and the development of specific sensitivity traits, though the findings should be interpreted with caution, given the high proportion of participants with advanced degrees (76.3%).

e. Teaching experience

The analysis of teaching experience indicated that it was not a strong determinant of overall IS. Mean overall scores were comparable across groups with 0–2, 3–10, and more than 10 years of experience, and the overall ANOVAs on the combined 24 questions and five dimensions were not statistically significant. However, despite the lack of a broad effect, item-level analysis revealed a significant difference for Q12 (related to Interaction Enjoyment), where mid-career teachers (3–10 years) scored significantly higher than their early-career colleagues ($p = .024$). These findings should be interpreted with caution due to the sample's skew towards highly experienced educators (76.0%) and a small early-career group ($n=18$), suggesting that while duration of service may not determine general IS, it could influence specific developmental aspects.

f. Specialty

Teaching specialty did not emerge as a factor that broadly differentiated overall IS scores. In general, ANOVA tests showed no statistically significant variation across specialty groups for either the combined 24 ISS questions or the five dimensions. While descriptive statistics indicated some variation in mean overall scores, for example, Science & Mathematics teachers reported a mean of 4.35 compared to Arts teachers at 3.83, these differences were not statistically significant overall. Despite the lack of a broad effect, item-level analyses indicated statistically significant variations in certain aspects. Specifically, Dimension 1 (Interaction Engagement) showed a significant difference across specialties ($p=.048$) as did several individual items related to Interaction Engagement (e.g., Q1, $p=.017$; Q2, $p=.009$) and Respect for Cultural Differences (e.g., Q16, $p=.037$). However, these findings should be interpreted with caution due to significant imbalances in the sample, with several specialty groups being severely underrepresented (e.g., Arts, $n=4$; Physical Education, $n=4$).

g. Educational Level

Regarding the educational level at which teachers worked, the analysis showed no statistical association with Intercultural Sensitivity. The mean overall ISS scores for primary ($M=4.08$) and secondary ($M=4.06$) teachers were nearly identical.

Inferential analysis confirmed this lack of difference, with no statistically significant effects found across the 24 ISS items collectively ($p=.39$), the five dimensions collectively ($p=.89$) or on any individual item. This suggests that in this sample, a teacher's placement in primary or secondary education was not a significant factor in their IS profile.

h. Region

The examination of IS by administrative region indicated no statistically significant overall differences across regions for either the combined 24 ISS questions or the five dimensions collectively. Despite the absence of a broad effect, descriptive statistics revealed some variations in mean scores across the 13 regions, with teachers from the Peloponnese reporting the highest mean and those from Northern Aegean the lowest. These comparisons are limited by small sample sizes in some areas (e.g., Northern Aegean, $n=5$). In contrast to the overall results, item-level ANOVA tests did reveal statistically significant regional differences in certain areas. Specifically, items related to Interaction Engagement (Q13, Q24) and Respect for Cultural Differences (Q16) demonstrated significant variations. For example, teachers in Western Greece scored significantly higher than those in Central Macedonia (Q16: 4.66 vs. 4.16). This suggests that while region was not a broad differentiator of IS, it may influence specific aspects of sensitivity.

5. Discussion

This nationwide survey of Greek in-service teachers has provided the first comprehensive dataset on the intercultural sensitivity profiles of practitioners across all 13 administrative regions. Regarding the first and second research questions, the findings reveal a generally high level of reported sensitivity, yet the most significant insight emerges from the internal structure of this competence.

5.1. The Profile of Teacher Intercultural Sensitivity in a Greek Context

The statistical disparity between a strong attitudinal endorsement of cultural diversity (high Respect) and weaker self-efficacy (low Confidence) points to a “values-behavior gap”. This suggests that while teachers may genuinely hold respectful attitudes, they feel less prepared or less confident in meeting the behavioral demands of a multicultural classroom. The emergence of this pattern in the Greek context appears to align with prominent process-oriented models of intercultural competence. Specifically, it aligns with Deardorff's (2009) framework, which posits that foundational affective attitudes (such as respect) must be established before the behavioral skills necessary for effective external outcomes can fully mature. Furthermore, this disparity perfectly illustrates Byram's (1997) theoretical distinction between possessing the appropriate attitudes (*savoir être*) and mastering the practical skills of interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*).

Rather than being an isolated phenomenon, the persistence of this specific developmental asymmetry across highly diverse educational systems, including that of Algeria (Boudouaia et al. 2022), the cross-border regions of Slovenia and Italy (Zorman & Zudič Antonič, 2019), and even among specific linguistic sub-groups within Greece (Karras & Themelis 2025), suggests a systemic, transnational challenge in teacher formation. It is highly plausible that the rapid acceleration of student diversity globally has simply outpaced the evolution of practical, skills-based pedagogical training. Consequently, while teachers successfully internalize the cognitive and affective desire to be inclusive, they lack the experiential scaffolding required to translate these positive attitudes into confident, real-time intercultural action. Importantly, while this uneven profile represents a common developmental stage, the specific dimensions of strength and weakness remain sensitive to local socio-cultural norms, as evidenced by contrasting peaks in dimensions observed in distinct contexts, such as Chile (Sanhueza et al. 2017).

5.2. The Influence of Demographic Factors

This section discusses the influence of various demographic factors on teachers' intercultural sensitivity (IS) scores. Overall, the analysis revealed that certain demographic characteristics were more consistently associated with teachers' IS than others. Urbanity, postgraduate qualifications, and age all showed statistically significant overall relationships with teachers' scores on the ISS dimensions. For instance, teachers from non-urban areas and those with advanced degrees reported greater sensitivity in domains such as Interaction Engagement, while younger teachers also scored higher on aspects of engagement than older colleagues. In contrast, other demographic factors, namely gender, teaching experience, specialty, and administrative region, did not demonstrate statistically significant overall effects on broad measures of IS. Nevertheless, as detailed in the preceding analyses, fine-grained item-level differences were observed for each of these factors, suggesting that they exert subtle influences on particular aspects of teachers' perceptions of intercultural situations. The interpretation of all findings related to demographic factors should be approached with caution, particularly for subgroups with smaller sample sizes (e.g., certain regions and specialties), due to variations in statistical power.

However, it is necessary to carefully distinguish between statistical and practical significance when interpreting these variables. While factors like urbanity and qualifications yielded statistically significant p -values, their corresponding effect sizes (partial eta squared, η_p^2) were generally small (e.g., $\eta_p^2 < .05$). This indicates that, while demographic differences certainly exist, they explain only a modest portion of the variance in teachers' overall intercultural profiles. Consequently, these small practical effects should not be overinterpreted, as Greek teachers generally display a high baseline of intercultural sensitivity regardless of their specific demographic background.

a. Urbanity

One of the most significant and counterintuitive findings concerns the influence of urbanity. Teachers from non-urban areas reported distinctively higher IS, particularly in the domains of Interaction Engagement and Interaction Confidence. This stands in sharp contrast to other recent research, including a specific study in the Greek context by Karras and Themelis (2025), which found that urban EFL teachers scored higher on several IS items. The present finding challenges the common theoretical assumption that greater exposure to urban diversity automatically translates into higher sensitivity. While speculative based on our current quantitative data, it is plausible to hypothesize that in a post-COVID era, major urban centers in Greece are experiencing visible social pressures related to density that may color the context of contact. Similarly, another hypothesis for future exploration relates to the quality of contact. Teachers residing in non-urban, often tourist-centric regions might engage in more sustained, positive interactions with diverse visitors. These interpretations go beyond the current dataset. However,

they suggest that the qualitative context of contact may be a more decisive determinant of sensitivity than simple residential diversity. These socio-cultural dynamics present compelling avenues for future qualitative research.

b. Postgraduate Qualifications

The possession of a postgraduate qualification emerged as a significant factor consistently associated with higher IS, particularly in the dimensions of Engagement, Attentiveness, and Respect. This finding diverges from the recent results of Karras and Themelis (2025) regarding Greek EFL teachers, where formal qualifications did not emerge as significant correlates. The positive association found here suggests that advanced academic study enhances IS in two reinforcing ways. First, postgraduate education cultivates transferable skills such as critical thinking and self-reflection, which are fundamental for analyzing one's own cultural biases (Deardorff 2009). Second, it is plausible that postgraduate programs, particularly in an increasingly internationalized Greek academic environment, expose teachers to a more culturally diverse cohort of peers, providing a valuable source of direct intercultural contact.

c. Age

Age showed a subtle influence, with younger teachers reporting significantly higher scores for Interaction Enjoyment than their mid-career colleagues. This aligns with broader international data suggesting age significantly, though unpredictably, alters sensitivity profiles (Segura-Robles & Parra-González, 2019) but presents an interesting contrast to Karras and Themelis (2025), who found that older teachers (40+) scored higher on items related to confidence, though their study relied on a much smaller (124 participants) and narrower (EFL teachers) sample. These diverging results can be interpreted through Bennett's (2017) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Younger teachers may be in an enthusiastic "acceptance" stage, characterized by curiosity and enjoyment, whereas experienced teachers might be navigating the more demanding "adaptation" phase, or potentially experiencing professional burnout, which dampens emotional expressiveness.

d. Gender

The influence of gender presented a complex picture. Although a statistically significant effect was found across the five ISS dimensions, the practical difference in mean overall scores between male and female teachers was negligible. A detailed analysis revealed one item-level difference in Interaction Attentiveness, in which male teachers scored higher than their female colleagues. This specific finding diverges from some international research that found female teachers to be generally more sensitive (Boudouaia et al. 2022) but aligns with other studies reporting no significant gender effects (Drandić 2016; Sanhueza et al. 2017). This inconsistency suggests that the influence of gender is not universal but is mediated by socio-cultural contexts.

e. Teaching Experience

Years of teaching experience were not a strong predictor of IS overall. This finding challenges the assumption that senior teachers, having mastered pedagogy, would naturally be more confident in intercultural situations. Instead, the data align with broader international findings from contexts such as Algeria (Boudouaia et al. 2022) and Turkey (Gedik Bal 2023), as well as local Greek data (Karras & Themelis 2025), reinforcing the view that the quality of experience is more critical than its duration. Experience without structured reflection does not automatically lead to intercultural growth. The non-linear pattern that emerged for Interaction Enjoyment, with mid-career teachers scoring highest, further suggests that progression is influenced by complex dynamics across career stages rather than by time alone.

f. Systemic homogeneity: specialty, region, and educational level

Finally, the factors of teaching specialty, administrative region, and educational level showed no significant overall effects on IS. Regarding specialty, this lack of variation suggests that the shared professional culture and national curriculum frameworks for teachers in Greece foster a homogenous level of sensitivity that overrides disciplinary differences. Whether a teacher focuses on Science or Humanities, their formation within the state system appears to be the dominant factor. Regarding the region, the lack of a strong effect suggests a relatively uniform level of teacher IS across the region. Theoretically, this highlights the homogenizing influence of a centralized education system. Models of intercultural competence imply the key role of formal education; it is plausible that the shared curriculum and standardized training within the Greek system foster a consistent level of sensitivity that overrides localized influences, a trend that aligns with scholars such as Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2009). Finally, regarding educational level, the non-finding aligns with other research (Drandić 2016; Sanhueza et al. 2017) and suggests that the core professional culture is more influential than the specific age group taught. This study's direct comparison contributes evidence that IS in the Greek context may be more dependent on individual characteristics, such as postgraduate training, than on the structural level of a teacher's placement. Furthermore, much of the existing research on teacher IS in the Greek context has focused on a single level, often primary education (e.g., Chranioti & Arvanitis, 2018) or pre-service primary teachers (e.g., Spithourakis et al., 2009).

6. Conclusion

This nationwide survey revealed that while Greek in-service teachers report a generally high level of intercultural sensitivity, their competence profile is distinctly uneven. The most salient finding was a significant "values-behavior gap": participants demonstrated strong inclusive attitudes by scoring highest on Respect for Cultural Differences, but lacked practical communicative self-efficacy, scoring consistently lowest on Interaction Confidence. Furthermore, demographic analyses indicated that postgraduate qualifications and non-urban residency were significantly associated with higher overall sensitivity, underscoring the value of advanced academic training and the quality of local contact. Conversely, factors such as gender, general teaching experience, and administrative region did not serve as strong broad predictors, suggesting that prolonged classroom exposure alone is insufficient to develop these complex affective characteristics. The central takeaway for the Greek educational system is clear: the focus of professional development must evolve. It is no longer sufficient to cultivate only strong attitudes of respect; instead, policy must prioritize targeted, skills-based interventions. Placing these results in the global context makes it evident that the "Greek case" is part of a wider international effort to bridge the gap between values and effective practice. By moving in this direction, the system can empower teachers with the interactional self-efficacy required to handle

intercultural situations confidently, thus fostering inclusive learning environments where cultural diversity is not only respected but also leveraged to improve academic outcomes for a diverse student population.

7. Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

The findings of this nationwide survey carry significant practical implications for educational policy and teacher training in Greece. The identification of this distinct “values-behavior gap” provides a clear directive for intervention. For professional development, this necessitates a strategic evolution; approaches that focus primarily on cultivating tolerance appear unnecessary, as teachers already demonstrate strong values in this area. Instead, training must shift towards building behavioral competence and self-efficacy. From our perspective, this transition toward pedagogical intercultural adroitness requires moving beyond passive seminars toward practical, experiential interventions. First, we propose using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), as described by scholars such as Hiller (2023). By requiring teachers to simulate real-life intercultural interactions and resolve real-world classroom misunderstandings in a controlled environment, the system can systematically build Interaction Confidence (D3), which our data show is currently a primary weakness. Second, the positive link between postgraduate qualifications and sensitivity suggests that the Reflective Practitioner model (Schön 2017) should be the standard for in-service growth. We propose establishing “intercultural professional learning communities” in which teachers use structured “intercultural portfolios” to critically analyze their daily interactions. This approach ensures that “quality of contact”, and not merely the duration of service, actually leads to intercultural sensitivity. Interventions should prioritize those experiential methodologies, such as scenario-based problem-solving and guided critical reflection, to equip teachers with the practical skills required for complex intercultural interactions. Additionally, the positive link between postgraduate qualifications and sensitivity underscores the need to integrate higher-order critical thinking and meaningful intercultural contact into initial teacher training. This ensures that these competencies are developed early in a teacher’s career. Since factors like specialty and region were not strong predictors, the data support a unified, nationwide strategy rather than isolated measures for specific subgroups.

While this study offers the first nationwide dataset, certain limitations exist. The quantitative, cross-sectional design relies on self-reports, which risk social desirability bias, in which teachers might overstate positive attitudes. Methodologically, the Interaction Enjoyment and Interaction Attentiveness subscales showed lower internal consistency in this context, necessitating caution in their interpretation. Additionally, the sample was skewed towards experienced, female teachers with postgraduate degrees, which may limit the generalizability of the results for younger educators or underrepresented specialties. To address these constraints, future research should employ mixed-methods designs to explore the “values-behavior gap” through classroom observations, providing a clearer image of how affective traits translate into practice. Specifically, future qualitative research could explore whether female teachers’ lower self-reported attentiveness or confidence reflects real-world challenges, such as interacting with students from patriarchal backgrounds who may respond differently to female teachers. Quantitative data alone cannot capture such dynamics. Longitudinal designs are also recommended to track the development of intercultural sensitivity over time, alongside intervention-based research to assess how education and training impact actual classroom practice.

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