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A Structural Model of the Relationships Between Cultural Intelligence and Job Adjustment: The Mediating Role of Perceived Psychological Climate Among Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to test a structural model of the relationships between cultural intelligence and job adjustment, with perceived psychological climate as a mediator, among teachers.

Methods: This descriptive, correlational study used a structural equation modeling approach. The statistical population consisted of elementary school teachers in public schools in Shahriar County. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, a sample of 340 participants was determined and selected via simple random sampling. Data were collected using the standard Cultural Intelligence Scale (Ang et al., 2004), the Job Adjustment Questionnaire (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), and the Psychological Climate Questionnaire (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991). Descriptive analyses and correlation tests were performed with SPSS, and structural equation modeling was performed with AMOS.

Results: The results showed RMSEA = .078 and CFI > .90, indicating an acceptable fit for the research model. Accordingly, the mediating role of perceived psychological climate in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment was confirmed. Standardized path coefficients (β) showed significant effects ($p < .01$) for cultural intelligence on psychological climate (β = .646), psychological climate on job adjustment (β = .301), and the direct effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment (β = .526). In addition, the indirect effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment through perceived psychological climate was significant ($p < .01$).

Conclusions: Cultural intelligence, both directly and through strengthening a positive psychological climate in the workplace, can lead to greater job adjustment among teachers. Accordingly, enhancing cultural intelligence and improving the psychological climate in schools is an effective strategy for increasing teachers' adjustment and effectiveness.

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Introduction

In the complex and evolving context of contemporary educational systems, enhancing the effectiveness of human resources—teachers in particular—is a major concern for policymakers and education researchers. Contemporary classrooms are no longer limited to students with homogeneous cultural backgrounds; instead, they have become a living arena for the interaction and confrontation of diverse cultures, values, beliefs, and learning styles (Gay, 2018). In this complex and dynamic context, teachers at the front line of the education system face challenges in establishing effective communication, managing classrooms, and delivering high-quality instruction to culturally diverse students (Banks, 2015). Teachers' professional success in this arena depends not only on mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge but also requires competencies beyond specialized qualifications (Dzerviniks et al., 2024), calling for a kind of cultural knowledge and insight that equips them to attain cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Cultural intelligence, as an emerging metacognitive construct, is an essential capability for teachers and plays a key role in explaining adaptive capacity and effective engagement in intercultural contexts (Ang et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2025). This construct, grounded in theories of multiple intelligences, intercultural competence, and social psychology, comprises four dimensions—metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. The metacognitive dimension reflects individuals' awareness and monitoring of their own cognitive processes during cultural interactions; the cognitive dimension involves knowledge and awareness of different cultures; the motivational dimension refers to the degree of interest and motivation to engage with other cultures; and finally, the behavioral dimension reflects the ability to display appropriate behaviors in different cultural situations (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). Alongside cultural intelligence, job adjustment is regarded as a key indicator of teachers' well-being and professional success. Job adjustment refers to the dynamic process by which an individual becomes attuned to the requirements of their job role, the physical and social work environment, and their colleagues (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). The conceptual and empirical application of cultural intelligence in explaining job adjustment—as one of the important indicators of occupational health and professional performance—still faces considerable theoretical ambiguity and research gaps. Unlike the traditional approach based on static fit, job adjustment is defined in contemporary literature as a dynamic, contextual process that depends on psychological and environmental

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resources (Pulakos et al., 2000). Studies have shown that cultural intelligence plays an important role in facilitating communication processes, reducing conflict, and increasing efficiency in multicultural environments (Livermore, 2015). From the perspective of person–environment fit theory, when a teacher's abilities and needs align with the requirements and resources of the educational environment, more favorable job adjustment results (Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). For teachers, this adjustment includes dimensions such as adjustment to teaching tasks, adjustment to stakeholder groups (students, parents, colleagues), and adjustment to the school's organizational culture. Teachers with high job adjustment report greater job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, lower occupational stress, and lower turnover intention (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In elementary education in Iran—particularly in different geographic regions and metropolitan areas, where continuous interaction with students, parents, and colleagues from diverse cultures and social backgrounds is the norm—teachers' cultural capacity has become one of the important explanatory variables for the quality of educational interactions, conflict resolution, and professional sustainability. This capacity not only improves intercultural interactions but also plays a key role in teachers' job adjustment, since greater cultural understanding lays the groundwork for flexible, adaptive responses to environmental pressures (Van Dyne et al., 2008; Raver & Van Dyne, 2017). Although cultural intelligence appears to directly affect teachers' job adjustment, this relationship is not necessarily simple and linear, and likely operates through a context of complex mediating variables (James & Jones, 1974). This is where the role of organizational context—and specifically perceived psychological climate—becomes prominent. Perceived psychological climate, as an environmental variable, reflects individuals' perceptions of the psychological and cultural support available in the work environment and can serve as a mediating factor, playing a key role in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment. Koys and DeCotiis (1991) conceptualized psychological climate as comprising eight dimensions—autonomy, trust, cohesion, pressure, support, recognition, fairness, and innovation—aimed at motivating employees to raise the quality of their work and make greater use of human resources within the organization, ultimately leading to increased satisfaction. A positive psychological climate, characterized by trust, honesty, mutual respect, and support for innovation, provides a setting in which teachers feel they can experiment with new ideas without fear of humiliation or punishment, learn from their mistakes, and fully

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deploy their abilities, including their cultural intelligence (Edmondson, 2018). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), when teachers perceive their work environment as supportive and positive, they respond with greater commitment and effort—including effort toward better adjustment to a multicultural environment. Thus, psychological climate appears to be not merely a contextual variable but a key mediating variable in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment. In other words, teachers' cultural intelligence, by shaping their perception of a supportive school climate, ultimately leads to better job adjustment. This relationship may arise because individuals with high cultural intelligence evaluate their work environment with a more flexible, receptive, and positive outlook, thereby experiencing a more favorable psychological climate that lays the groundwork for better adjustment to job conditions. On the other hand, a positive psychological climate, as a vital source of psychological and social support, can facilitate the positive effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment and moderate the effects of cultural and environmental pressures. The results of Min et al. (2023) showed that among the four dimensions of cultural intelligence (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral), cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence played the primary roles: motivational cultural intelligence predicted burnout and employee engagement, while cognitive cultural intelligence predicted engagement. In addition, motivational and cognitive cultural intelligence had an indirect effect on job satisfaction through engagement or job burnout. The results of Jyoti and Kour (2017) showed that emotional intelligence and social intelligence significantly influence cultural intelligence. Similar findings have been reported in the domestic (Iranian) literature.

Rajabi Farjad and Jahangiri (2020), in a study titled "The Effect of Cultural Intelligence on Employee Voice with the Mediating Role of Transformational Leadership," showed that by employing a transformational leadership style and drawing on cultural intelligence, the acceptance of positive relationships with others is facilitated, and through this, employee voice can be better understood. Kameli et al. (2018) found that psychological capital positively and significantly affects cultural intelligence, and that cultural intelligence in turn positively and significantly affects organizational trust and job adjustment; organizational trust also positively and significantly affects job adjustment. Heidari and Khashei (2016), in a study titled "Analyzing the Relationship Between Job Characteristics and Job Adjustment," showed that job characteristics directly affect

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job adjustment and job satisfaction, and that job satisfaction also mediates the effect on job adjustment.

A systematic review of the literature (both international and domestic) shows that, despite the strategic importance of cultural intelligence and job adjustment, most existing studies have limited themselves to examining simple relationships between these variables. For example, at the international level, studies such as Min et al. (2023) have addressed only the direct effect of cultural intelligence dimensions on burnout and job satisfaction, and Jyoti and Kour (2017) have focused only on identifying the antecedents of cultural intelligence, without examining the mediating mechanism of contextual variables in educational settings. At the domestic level, the study by Rajabi Farjad and Jahangiri (2020) was conducted in the context of administrative (non-educational) organizations and did not address the psychological climate variable. Kameli et al. (2018), although addressing the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment, explained their model without the presence of contextual variables and relied on a simple correlational approach rather than causal-structural modeling.

Given this, the main gap in the research literature is that, to date, no study in the Iranian educational context—particularly among elementary school teachers—has simultaneously tested the causal relationships among "cultural intelligence" as the independent variable, "perceived psychological climate" as the mediating variable, and "job adjustment" as the dependent variable, using a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach capable of distinguishing direct from indirect effects. This theoretical and empirical gap has left our understanding of how teachers' individual capabilities translate into practical adjustment in multicultural environments incomplete.

The present study, aiming to fill this gap, has three distinct levels of innovation (model innovation, methodological innovation, and contextual innovation) that distinguish it from prior research. While previous studies have often limited themselves to examining the direct relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment (or have examined a moderating role), the theoretical innovation of this study lies in designing and testing a mediating causal model. Drawing on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and person–environment fit theory (Edwards & Shipp, 2007), we argue that cultural intelligence leads to job adjustment not directly, but through reshaping teachers' perception of the school's psychological climate. This model reveals the hidden pathway of

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influence and, unlike previous linear models, shows policymakers "how" and "through what pathway" cultural intelligence contributes to improved job performance.

The methodological advantage of this study over previous research (which has often used multiple regression or Pearson correlation) is its use of structural equation modeling (SEM) with a maximum likelihood (ML) approach. This method allows the direct, indirect, and total effects of cultural intelligence on job adjustment to be estimated simultaneously while controlling for measurement error—an aspect that has been overlooked in prior domestic research in this specific area.

In this regard, a systematic examination of the mediating role of psychological climate in explaining the pathway through which cultural intelligence affects job adjustment can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between individual capacities and environmental structures.

The contextual innovation of this study lies in the selection of Shahriar County, one of the counties surrounding Tehran. It is an immigration-receiving area with a heterogeneous ethnic composition and latent multicultural infrastructure, which, unlike prior studies (often conducted in monocultural regions or industrial organizations), provides a naturalistic setting for assessing cultural intelligence in a real educational environment and increases the generalizability of the results to similar regions.

Accordingly, this study represents an effort to enrich the existing theoretical literature, reveal the hidden causal structure of the variables under investigation, and offer practical recommendations for improving teachers' job adjustment in multicultural educational contexts. Given the theoretical foundations and literature presented, and the importance of the topic for the teaching profession, the main research question of the present study is: Is there a significant relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment, with the mediating role of perceived psychological climate, among elementary school teachers in Shahriar County? This study seeks to explain this relationship and fill the research gap in this specific geographic context, so as to deepen theoretical understanding and offer effective managerial and educational strategies for improving the quality of teachers' work life and enhancing the efficiency of the education system.

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Materials and Methods

Participants and Procedure

The present study aimed to test a structural model of the relationships between cultural intelligence and job adjustment, with perceived psychological climate as a mediator, among teachers. The statistical population comprised all elementary school teachers in public schools of Shahriar County in the 2022–2023 academic year, from whom 340 participants were selected based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, using random sampling and an organizational database. Inclusion criteria were informed consent and employment as a teacher at the elementary level in Shahriar County. Exclusion criteria included failure to complete the questionnaires, change of workplace, or withdrawal from participation. Ethical principles and participants' rights were carefully observed throughout the study. Before data collection began, the study's objectives were fully and clearly explained to all participants, and written informed consent was obtained. Participants were also assured that their personal information and responses would remain confidential and would be used only for scientific and research purposes. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without negative consequences. Collected data were stored and analyzed anonymously, and no identifying information was reported in the results.

Data were collected using the standard Cultural Intelligence Questionnaire by Ang et al. (2004), the Job Adjustment Questionnaire by Dawis and Lofquist (1984), and the Psychological Climate Questionnaire by Koys and DeCotiis (1991), administered electronically by sending the questionnaire link to the selected sample while observing ethical considerations.

Instruments

a) Cultural Intelligence Questionnaire

This 20-item questionnaire, developed by Ang et al. in 2004, comprises four factors: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. Scoring is based on a 5-point Likert scale. Using responses from more than 1,350 respondents with diverse demographic and cultural backgrounds, the original developers confirmed its construct validity through confirmatory factor analysis. The reported range of Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four dimensions is .70 to .95. In the study by Hamidi et al. (2013), the questionnaire's face and content validity were confirmed by 16 university faculty members. In the present study, the questionnaire's content validity was confirmed by experts in educational sciences. Construct validity was confirmed using

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confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with AMOS, and fit indices indicated a satisfactory fit for the four-factor model. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was calculated as .92, indicating very satisfactory reliability of the instrument.

b) Job Adjustment Questionnaire

Job adjustment was measured using the 36-item questionnaire developed by Shahrabi Farahani (2012), based on the theory of Dawis and Lofquist (1984), comprising seven subscales (achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety, autonomy, and adjustment style). Scoring is based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very low = 1 to very high = 5, such that a score of 1 indicates the lowest level of job adjustment and a score of 5 indicates the highest level. Content validity was confirmed through expert consensus, and construct validity was confirmed by computing a correlation of .73 ($p < .001$) with the Dunette Job Satisfaction Questionnaire on a sample of 50 individuals. In addition, the reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach's alpha at .84. In the present study, the content validity of this instrument was reconfirmed by a number of experts. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire in this study was likewise .84.

c) Psychological Climate Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by Koys and DeCotiis (1991) and comprises eight subscales: autonomy, cohesion, trust, pressure, support, recognition, fairness, and innovation. It has 40 items (5 items per subscale), scored on a 5-point Likert scale. According to Koys and DeCotiis, the reliability of this questionnaire for autonomy, cohesion, trust, pressure, support, recognition, fairness, and innovation was .82, .89, .85, .83, .83, .89, .84, and .87, respectively. The construct validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by the original developers through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which yielded the eight-factor structure described above.

In the Iranian population, Barati (2019), studying 145 faculty members at Farhangian University, confirmed the instrument's validity using convergent and discriminant validity methods and its reliability using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and factor loadings. In the analysis by Beikzad (2022), face/nominal validity and convergent validity—confirmed by faculty and experts—were used to establish the instrument's validity, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all psychological climate variables were .94. In the present study, the content validity of this instrument was reconfirmed by a number of experts, and its reliability was also calculated, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85.

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Data Analysis

Data analysis in the present study was carried out using SPSS 26 and AMOS 26 at both descriptive and inferential levels, as well as through structural equation modeling. At the descriptive level, mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage frequency indices were used. To examine the significance of the mediating effect, the bootstrapping method was used, and to test the conceptual model and mediating relationships, path analysis within the structural equation modeling framework was used.

Results

Data on the gender distribution of the sample group show that, of the 340 teachers participating in the study, 238 were women and 102 were men. Data on the educational attainment of the sample group showed that 15 held a diploma, 25 held an associate degree, 183 held a bachelor's degree, 111 held a master's degree, and 6 held a doctoral degree. Data on the age distribution of participants showed that 98 members were between 20 and 30 years old, 143 were between 31 and 40, 69 were between 41 and 50, and 30 were over 50 years old.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of research variable scores

Statistical index	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Standard deviation
Cultural intelligence	-0.501	0.103	87.58	15.459
Perceived psychological climate	-0.553	0.492	129.21	20.439
Job adjustment	-0.626	0.371	121.85	23.562

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the cultural intelligence variable, including skewness and kurtosis alongside the mean and standard deviation of the scores. The results show that the overall mean score for cultural intelligence is 87.58, the overall mean score for perceived psychological climate is 129.21, and the overall mean score for job adjustment is 121.85. Furthermore, given that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fall between +2 and -2, the data can be considered normally distributed at the .05 level.

Table 2. Correlation coefficient matrix among the research variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. Cultural intelligence	1		
2. Perceived psychological climate	.553**	1	
3. Job adjustment	.599**	.598**	1

* Significant at the .05 level ** Significant at the .01 level

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Table 2 presents the correlation results among cultural intelligence, perceived psychological climate, and job adjustment. All computed correlation coefficients are significant at the .01 alpha level ($p < .01$). The correlations between cultural intelligence and perceived psychological climate with job adjustment are positive. The positive coefficients indicate a direct relationship between cultural intelligence and perceived psychological climate with job adjustment. Based on the results presented in Table 3, none of the tolerance and VIF statistics computed for the research variables show any deviation from the assumption of multicollinearity.

Table 3. Multicollinearity test results

Variables	Tolerance statistic	VIF
Cultural intelligence	0.694	1.441
Perceived psychological climate	0.694	1.441

To examine the model of the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment, with the mediating role of teachers' perceived psychological climate, structural equation modeling was used. Before conducting the structural equation analysis, univariate outliers were examined using box plots and multivariate outliers using the Mahalanobis distance statistic, and were removed from the data set. The skewness and kurtosis of the score distributions for the variables were computed, and the results showed that none of the skewness or kurtosis values exceeded the ±1 range. The normality of the data was examined using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, and the results showed that the score distributions of all three model variables were normal ($p > .05$). The assumption of error independence was examined using the Durbin–Watson statistic for the regression equations of the research model, and the obtained value indicated that this assumption was satisfied. The assumption of collinearity among the variables was examined using Pearson correlations between pairs of variables. Since a bivariate correlation of .90 or higher indicates collinearity, this problem was not observed in the data of the present study. In addition, the tolerance statistic and variance inflation factor were computed to examine multicollinearity. The results showed that none of the tolerance values were below the acceptable threshold of .10, and none of the variance inflation factor values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 10. Accordingly, based on these two indices, no multicollinearity was observed in the data. After examining the assumptions and confirming that they were satisfied, structural equation modeling was used to

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evaluate the model under study. The model examined, along with its associated fit indices, is presented below.

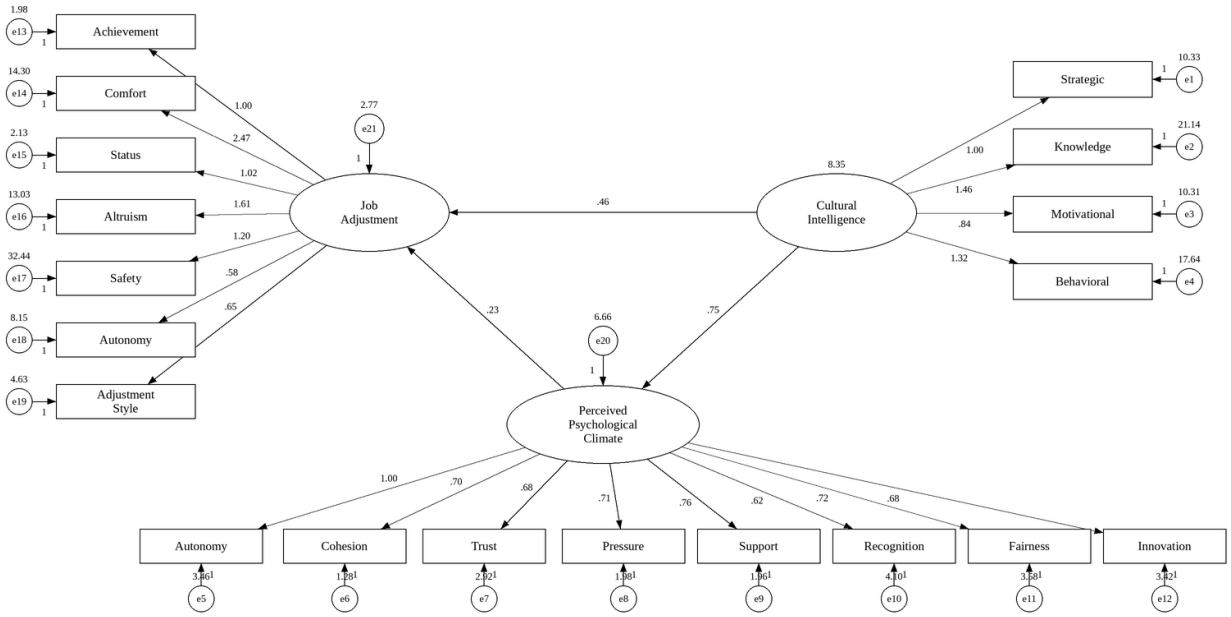


Figure 1. Unstandardized coefficients for the mediating role of perceived psychological climate in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment

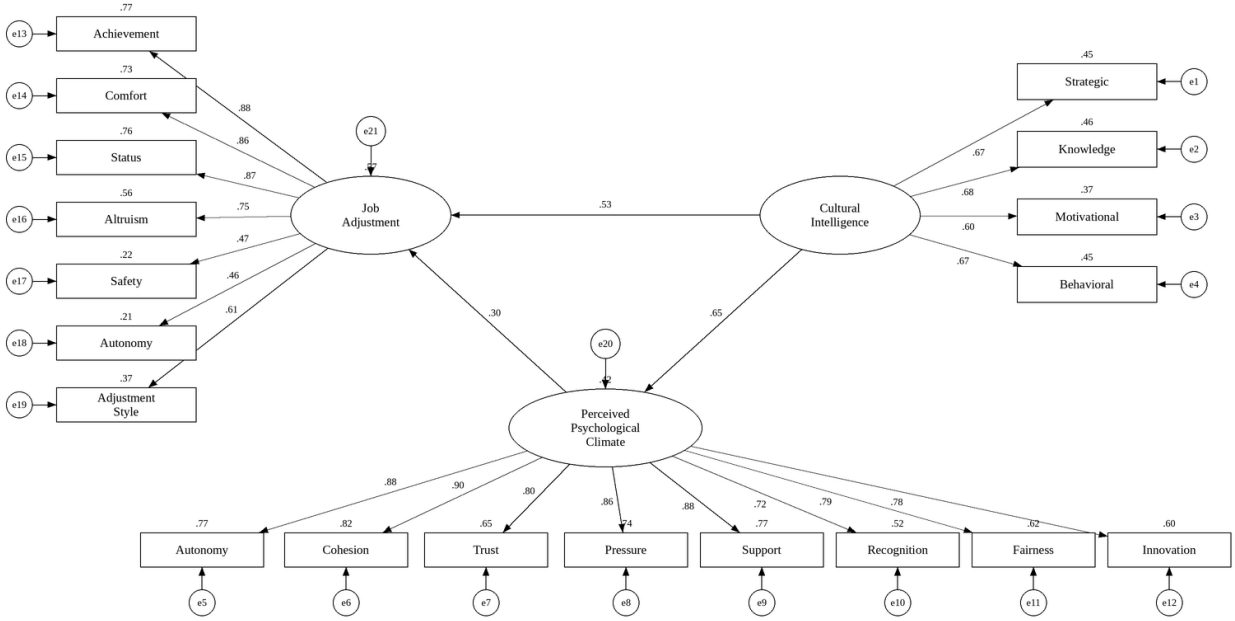


Figure 2. Standardized coefficients for the model of the mediating role of perceived psychological climate in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment

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Figures 1 and 2 present, respectively, the unstandardized and standardized coefficients of the proposed model examining the mediating role of perceived psychological climate in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment among teachers. The fit indices for the model are presented in the table below. The chi-square/degrees-of-freedom ratio ($\chi 2/df$) falls within the range of 1 to 5. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is .078, and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) is .059, both below the criterion value (.08). Finally, the CFI and IFI indices both exceed the criterion value (.90). Overall, considering all computed fit indices, the fit of the mediating model of perceived psychological climate in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment is confirmed by the data.

Table 4. Model fit indices

Fit index	Acceptable range	Observed value	Fit assessment
$\chi 2/df$	≤ 5	3.081	Adequate
IFI	> .90	.929	Adequate
RMSEA	< .08	.078	Adequate
SRMR	< .08	.059	Adequate
CFI	> .90	.928	Adequate

Table 5. Measurement model coefficients

			Standardized coefficient	C.R.	*p*
Cultural intelligence	→	Strategic	0.669		
Cultural intelligence	→	Knowledge	0.677	10.098	.01
Cultural intelligence	→	Motivational	0.605	9.220	.01
Cultural intelligence	→	Behavioral	0.674	10.044	.01
Perceived psychological climate	→	Autonomy	0.876		
Perceived psychological climate	→	Cohesion	0.903	24.393	.01
Perceived psychological climate	→	Trust	0.804	19.362	.01
Perceived psychological climate	→	Pressure	0.862	22.128	.01
Perceived psychological climate	→	Support	0.878	22.965	.01
Perceived psychological climate	→	Recognition	0.720	16.136	.01
Perceived psychological climate	→	Fairness	0.790	18.767	.01
Perceived psychological climate	→	Innovation	0.777	18.267	.01
Job adjustment	→	Achievement	0.875		
Job adjustment	→	Comfort	0.857	21.025	.01
Job adjustment	→	Status	0.872	21.695	.01
Job adjustment	→	Altruism	0.750	16.733	.01
Job adjustment	→	Safety	0.474	9.097	.01
Job adjustment	→	Autonomy	0.461	8.811	.01
Job adjustment	→	Adjustment style	0.610	12.460	.01

The results of the measurement model analyses are presented in Table 5. The significance of the regression weights for the measurement models of cultural intelligence, perceived psychological climate, and job adjustment indicates that all indicators adequately represent their respective latent

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variables. The bootstrap method was used to determine the statistical significance of the indirect effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment through the mediating role of perceived psychological climate. The results are presented below.

Table 6. Path coefficient for the indirect effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment through the mediating variable of perceived psychological climate

Indirect path			Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	Significance level
Cultural intelligence	Perceived psychological climate	Job adjustment	0.171	0.195	.01

Based on the results obtained, the coefficient for the indirect effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment through the mediating variable of perceived psychological climate is significant at the .01 alpha level ($p < .01$). Accordingly, the research hypothesis regarding the mediating role of perceived psychological climate in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment is confirmed.

Table 7. Path coefficient for the direct effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment

Path			Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	*t* statistic	Significance level
Cultural intelligence	→	Job adjustment	0.463	0.526	6.502	.01

Based on the results obtained, the coefficient for the direct effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment is positive and significant at the .01 alpha level ($p < .01$). Accordingly, the research hypothesis regarding the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment among elementary school teachers in Shahriar County is confirmed.

Table 8. Path coefficient for the direct effect of cultural intelligence on perceived psychological climate

Path			Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	*t* statistic	Significance level
Cultural intelligence	→	Perceived psychological climate	0.755	0.646	9.035	.01

Table 9 presents the results for the path coefficient of the direct effect of cultural intelligence on perceived psychological climate. The results show that the path coefficient for the relationship between cultural intelligence and perceived psychological climate is positive and significant at the .01 alpha level ($p < .01$). Accordingly, the research hypothesis regarding the relationship between

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cultural intelligence and perceived psychological climate among elementary school teachers in Shahriar County is confirmed.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to test a structural model of the relationships between cultural intelligence and job adjustment, with perceived psychological climate as a mediator, among elementary school teachers in Shahriar County. The results of the data analysis show that the coefficient for the indirect effect of cultural intelligence on job adjustment through the mediating variable of perceived psychological climate is significant at the .01 alpha level ($p < .01$). Accordingly, the research hypothesis regarding the mediating role of perceived psychological climate in the relationship between cultural intelligence and job adjustment is confirmed. These results are directly or indirectly consistent with the findings of Rajabi Farjad and Jahangiri (2020), Kameli et al. (2018), Heidari and Khashei (2016), Yarmohammadzadeh and Dadashzadeh (2015), Earley and Ang (2003), Min et al. (2023), and Jyoti and Kour (2017).

The findings of this study confirm that the relationship between cultural intelligence and teachers' job adjustment in the multicultural context of Shahriar is not a simple linear relationship, and that cultural intelligence alone is not sufficient to enhance job adjustment unless it also fosters a positive psychological climate in the school. In educational settings with high cultural diversity, teachers with high cultural intelligence can, through a deeper understanding of differences and the adoption of metacognitive strategies, gradually improve the psychological climate of the classroom and school, and it is this improved climate that plays the primary role in increasing job adjustment. Cultural intelligence helps individuals acquire the knowledge and awareness necessary about the culture of their work environment and adopt appropriate maps and strategies when facing cultural conflicts. In other words, employees with high cultural intelligence perform better in culturally diverse organizations because of their ability to understand others' cultural ideologies and act in accordance with colleagues' expectations (Akpan & Inyang, 2022), and they achieve better adjustment to their jobs (Li et al., 2021). In addition, by understanding the cultural cues that others use in their work environments, they know how to interact appropriately with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. In fact, cultural intelligence causes teachers to perceive the school climate more positively for several reasons. First, it reduces threatening

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attributional biases and attributes ambiguous behaviors to situational factors rather than discrimination or injustice; this cognitive reappraisal prevents the attribution of hostile intent to the environment. Second, behavioral and motivational cultural intelligence gives teachers the ability to correctly identify the hidden layers of social interaction in the school, increases their ability to decode normative and emotional cues, and prevents role ambiguity and a defensive climate. Third, teachers themselves exhibit behaviors that facilitate a positive climate (such as respect for differences), which in turn elicits positive feedback from the environment. Fourth, in Iranian educational settings, where teachers may come together from different regions, ethnicities, or cultural backgrounds, teachers with low cultural intelligence may perceive their differences as a threat to acceptance and belonging. This threatening interpretation of difference leads them to perceive the school as unsupportive, exclusionary, and even discriminatory. In contrast, a teacher with high cultural intelligence regards difference as a source of learning, richness of experience, and an opportunity for personal development. This cognitive reconstruction of cultural identity fosters feelings of worth, acceptance, and participation—rather than marginalization—all of which are core components of a positive psychological climate, and which in turn strengthen feelings of belonging, acceptance, and fairness. On this basis, these interactions and adjustment to various situations and conditions enable individuals to plan and organize their work in a logical manner suited to the organization's conditions and circumstances, and to perform their assigned job duties in the best possible way.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that a cultural intelligence unit be incorporated into the curricula of in-service empowerment courses for elementary teachers; that selection and recruitment criteria for teachers be redesigned for multicultural, immigration-receiving areas such as Shahriar County; that intervention protocols based on perceived psychological climate be developed and their implementation required in public schools; and finally, that specialized job-adjustment working groups be established at the level of each educational district, with a fixed membership (school counselors, occupational psychologists, and teacher representatives) for ongoing monitoring and corrective feedback. Like other studies, the present study also has limitations, including reliance on self-report data and its restriction to Shahriar County, the elementary level, and teachers only. Future researchers are advised to use complementary methods such as semi-structured interviews or 360-degree assessment to reduce self-report bias; to conduct

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similar research in other cities with different socio-cultural contexts; and to extend the scope of research to higher and lower educational levels and to other occupations.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

All ethical principles were observed in this article. Participants were permitted to withdraw from the study at any time they wished. In addition, all participants were kept informed of the research process.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the design, implementation, and writing of all sections of the present study.

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Conflict of interest

According to the authors' statement, this article has no conflict of interest.

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