



Integration of social, emotional, and cultural intelligence amongst international students in Ireland

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Abstract

Background: The evolution of intelligence has contributed enormously to various aspects in a life cycle of a human being, and has helped understand the criticality, in-depth value within it. Many researchers have investigated on the importance of social, cultural, and emotional intelligence.

Objective: To explore further on the above mentioned three important dimensions of intelligence and its effect on the journey of international students in Ireland.

Design: This article reports findings using an interpretivist study approach, it involved international students pursuing their master's degree post pandemic era in Ireland.

Participants: 12 international students from uniquely different country of origin were chosen for this study using purposive sampling technique.

Methods: The researcher used the concept analysis framework to explore the main three dimensions of intelligence, thematic analysis were also used to formulate themes for analysis and findings.

Results: Key findings highlight the significance of social, cultural, and emotional intelligence in the lives of international students in Ireland, especially while they experience success and failure when adapting to life in a new country. The perspectives of international students from these diverse cultural backgrounds are central to this research. Also capturing their progression in how they stood strong in these situations and matured as human beings, demonstrating the importance of having a higher level of these intelligence in life.

Conclusions: The main findings provide insights for prospective international students who are preparing to embark on a new academic journey in Ireland as an international student. Emphasizing the importance of adapting to a new sociocultural environment that is different from other countries, as well as the importance of upscaling to accept the Irish culture and embrace it as your own.

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1 Introduction

Relocating to a new nation requires readjusting to a brand-new culture. When faced with unexpected difficulties, it can be challenging to adjust to new circumstances and successfully integrate into society. International students that are eager to experience the academic journey and who must adapt, learn, and change must take on this difficult assignment. Interpersonal, effective communication, and people skills become crucial in this situation (Peterson, 2014). Understanding yourself and others is critical for developing relationships and maintaining one's well-being. Keeping these three factors in mind, the research will investigate emotional intelligence (EI), cultural intelligence (CI), and social intelligence (SI) and their relevance to international students in a European country like Ireland.

A decade ago, it was the work done by Wakeman (2009) and Li, Duanmu and Chen (2010) wherein EI and CI were identified as the two most common predictors to define efficiencies in an individual. Considering this, one could gauge the failure or a success in the overall performance of an international student (Li *et al.*, 2010; Wakeman, 2009). It was Warrier, John and Warrier (2021), that commented on the emotional and cultural aspect in international students and concluded that students with higher level of EI and CI perform far better than others. Habib, Johannesen and Ogrim (2014) highlighted the difficulties faced by international students in adjusting socially due to the sudden change in culture thus highlighting the importance of SI. It includes moving away from their existing culture and trying to adapt into a new country, its associated culture and trying to be efficient in managing the social aspect of any situation using SI (Habib *et al.*, 2014). Indeed, there were several studies in the past by Malik, Zikic and Cooper-Thomas (2014) and Dusi, Messetti and Steinbach (2014) that empirically evaluated the importance of understanding cultural differences and moreover on learning how to apply them to personal, situational and relational circumstances as these being the key to social integration process (Dusi *et al.*, 2014; Malik *et al.*, 2014). EI assists an individual in benchmarking his or her own capabilities and can always explore at a more perceived level. CI on the other had brings out the importance of multi-culture and its necessity to transform into an individual to accept cultural beliefs. This study intends to strongly supports the social aspect and examines SI as a crucial aspect in the life of an international student planning to begin their academic experience in Ireland.

Background: What is already known about this topic

In the field of intelligence, numerous models, theories, and definitions have been conceptualized and determined for the benefit of improvements. The term intelligence has gained recognition, spawning numerous new terminologies such as artificial intelligence, situational intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and many others.

Social, cultural, and emotional intelligence are the three dimensions most associated with human experiences. Previous researchers compared these dimensions in various categories or segments and drew their conclusions, broadening knowledge in these areas and creating significance for a better tomorrow.

Aim and Objective: What this paper adds

A culmination of selective models of competencies used in social, cultural, and emotional intelligence keeping in mind an international experience of academic students pursuing their master's degree in Ireland.

In comparison to the extensive research done on various constructs of intelligence, limited research has been done on these three important dimensions of intelligence in a collective manner. Furthermore, it is linked to the experiences of international students who plan to start or restart their careers in Ireland after the completion of their master's degree.

The main intent here is to also capture a post pandemic international experience shared by academic students in Ireland. Moreover, to spread awareness and enlighten the prospective international students on how they can be better prepared before arriving in the country.

Methodology approach:

The conceptual analysis technique of framework is the approach that the researcher will be following using a thematic approach while presenting the findings of this study (McCabe and Sambrook, 2014). In addition, the researcher of this study also critically evaluated the research onion concept by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) and decided to use the various decisions suggested to develop this research methodology.

2. Literature Review:

The goal of this literature review is to conduct a critical examination of the depth of emotional aspect, cultural belief, and social integration in a new country for an international student expedition. While doing so, this research will delve deeper into key concepts such as personal intelligence (self-awareness and management), relational intelligence (understanding and appreciating others), and situational intelligence (includes understanding and valuing diversity). In this case, the key audience of this research are international students, a group of individuals that have chosen to further their education in another country. Moving to a foreign nation and preparing to adjust to a new culture is a formidable concept in and of itself. Unpredictable hurdles await international students at every turn and with surprises at every juncture, yet they all share a common objective: obtaining an international academic experience (Brislin, Worthley and Macnab, 2006).

2.1 Cultural Intelligence

The biggest obstacle for an overseas student who has recently arrived is making the shift to a new culture and environment while keeping academic success as the primary focus. As Cultural Intelligence is a new concept in this decade, Crowne (2008) re-evaluated on many varied definitions and in the most simplified version, it can be explained as the capability to collate (understand), articulate (communicate), and execute (action upon) multicultural circumstances efficiently.

Introducing a few studies conducted by researchers in the field of Cultural Intelligence (CI) pertaining to an individual, group of people, academic students of any domain, working employees or specifically international students.

As per the study done by Mokhothu and Callaghan (2018), there are four elements that constitute CI, they are as listed below -

Metacognitive CI are characterized as an individual's perception of how information can be processed in relation to their culture. Individual's that demonstrate higher levels of metacognitive CI show more proactiveness in their thoughts and are also known to be more aware of everything (Le, Jiang and Radford, 2020). They are known to make more sensible social decisions when interacting with cultural diversity because they are better at understanding the challenges of cross-cultural integration.

Cognitive CI refers to a person's in-depth understanding of the procedure, execution, and standards that should be followed (also known to be more authoritative). These are being obtained via life skills, personal, academic, and professional experiences and have a significant bearing on cultural differences. Thus, it can be said that individuals who have been identified as having greater levels of cognitive intelligence can demonstrate that they are superior decision-makers during renowned cross-cultural

meetings or other types of talks. With this level of propensity and tagged with an expert on subject matter they can easily distinguish between the commonalities and variances on legal and social matters (Mokhothu and Callaghan, 2018).

According to Karami and Izadpanah (2022), there are three crucial elements that help people navigate in a cross-cultural setting and are very similar to behavioural CI.

- 1) Stress reduction
- 2) Effective communication; and
- 3) Forge connections with people from different cultural backgrounds (Karami and Izadpanah, 2022).

As noted by Earley and Mosakowski (2016), and in contrast to the aforementioned objective, a substantial amount of significance is placed on verbal and nonverbal clues that are relevant to the behavioural part of cultural intelligence.

Motivational CI refers to the desire, willingness, and acceptance of an individual who is prepared to adapt in a new cultural setting; this is also related to the motivation underpinning cognitive knowledge and cognitive process (Crowne, 2013; 2008).

2.1.1 Broadening Cultural Intelligence

Conceptually, CI is a recent development but has emerged quicker than predicted (Stoermer, Davies and Froese, 2021). Listed below are some key competencies and ways to improve CI by focusing equally on strategic implementation of various types of learning patterns.

Intercultural competence

This can be defined as an individual or a group of people that interact with each other having different background, cultural values and are from another location (Cots *et al.*, 2016). As per Franklin-Craft (2010), his study examined the relationships between the current demographic characteristics of international students, the same has been elaborated in table 1. Factors such as (a) years of professional service in student (b) frequency of on-going intercultural training received during work or through other educational courses done in the past, (c) the amount of time spent outside their country of origin, may have travelled for work or vacation and (d) direct exposure with various cultures that can be witnessed via content like videos or articles posted on social media platforms (Franklin-Craft, 2010). The highlights above give a much broader perspective on the pros and cons about the country's cultural aspects. For example, a pure vegetarian individual from India, if he/she must survive in Ireland it is easy to detail out that there are less options of veggies in comparison to meats, the same can very easily be found out via the options available in the local market via a simple google search. It was observed that Franklin-

Craft (2010) additionally surveyed 465 students to assess various such dimensions on intercultural competencies. On a similar line it was Deardorff (2011) that formulated the process model of intercultural competencies emphasizing on the certain key aspects of attitude, knowledge, skills, internal and external outcomes. Attitude refers to the level of mutual respect amongst people you interact with on timely basis. If you show respect, you get the same in return, this is a form of emotion that can be instigated and used at incidents that matter the most. Knowledge in this regard is more to do with understanding an individual from a global lens and accepting internationalisation. Skills here refers to the behavioural pattern of an individual that has the ability to understand wisely, make the necessary changes for the benefit of the larger audience and not be biased. Empathising others can be related to internal outcomes, wherein view of an individual are more ethnocentric. On the other hand, external outcomes can be defined as being to the point and providing efficiencies via various means of communication (Deardorff, 2011). Refer Figure 2 below that relates to the process orientation model of intercultural competencies

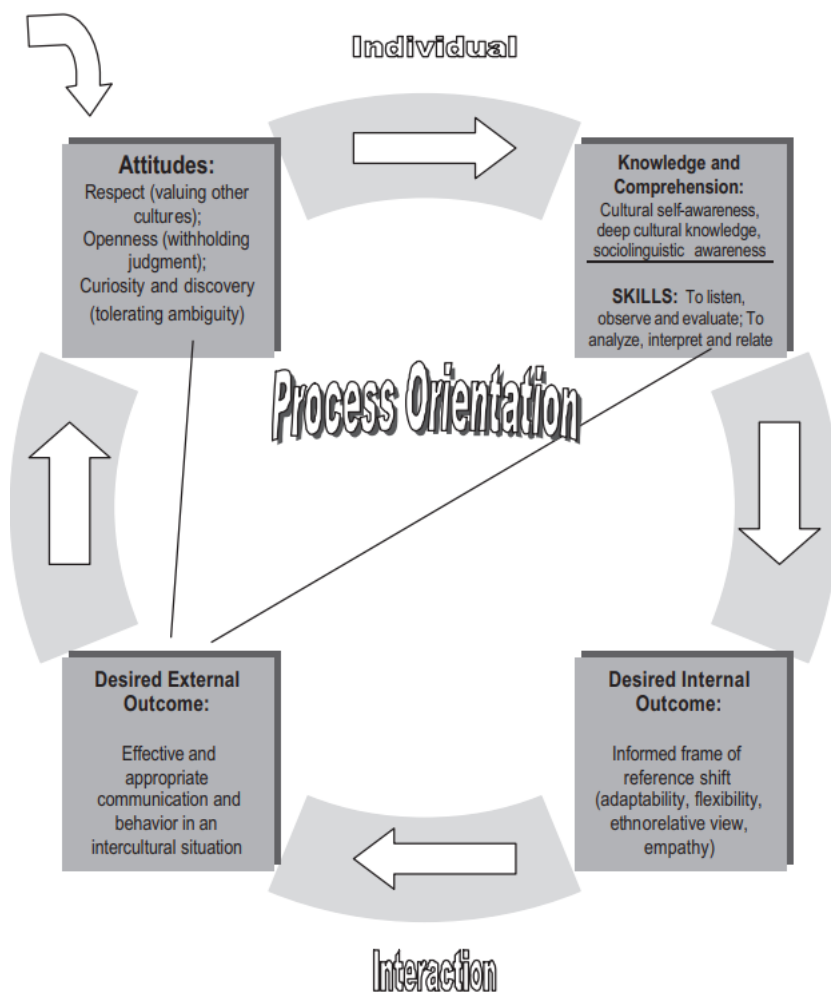


Figure 2: Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2009)

On a similar note, these findings were supported by Pham and Pham (2022) wherein an equal emphasis was given on various types of education to improve an individual's intercultural competence. They mentioned that the growth in cultural intelligence of an individual could be inevitable if these categories are well understood and are strategically implemented. Among the three categories, the first one is **informal education**, it is defined as a continuous learning process that cannot be separated as a part of a life's journey. As it includes the potential for acquiring knowledge, life skills that deals with communication with friends, family and the social environment (Pham and Pham, 2022). The second is **non-formal education**, this can be defined as extra curriculum activities and are not a part of the educational pattern, it includes any kind of volunteering work at community set ups, socialising at work or clubs (Pham and Pham, 2022). The third is **formal education**, it refers to a planned set of scheduled activities that are known to be followed by recognised educational institutions like school, college and universities (Pham and Pham, 2022).

Learning to adapt smartly

With a potentially high level of motivational cultural intelligence, international students are observing the learnings demonstrated over the media and trying to adapt using efficient methods (Guang Li and Middlemiss, 2022). Emphasis has also been given to social media here that transmits ideas, innovations via the internet and social networking platforms to individuals that are eager to learn and implement things strategically. Thus, providing a widening in thoughts to deal with issues that may arise due to adjustments in a new culture.

2.2 Emotional Intelligence

EI is a highly prominent component in the journey of a human being. It helps a person grow and mature over a period, it also helps an individual to manage relationships with every person he/she comes across in their daily duties of life. It can also be likely to say that success or failure may vary depending on how good a person is to manage interpersonal skills such as self- awareness, self- management, and self- motivation. The key point to be noted here is the language barrier, as this is a major factor in accommodating the interpersonal skills (Riggio and Reichard, 2008).

In 1983, Howard Gardner that introduced the concept of Intelligence wherein he listed 7 different variants of it includes linguistic intelligence, musical intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence (Joneja, 2016). International students face many challenges when studying in a new country, communication is one main challenge that not only affects the academic performance but can also impact on personal life including making friends, self-expression, managing conflict and emotional wellbeing. Emotional Intelligence is defined as the ability to understand, use, and manage your own

emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathise with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict (Schlegel and Mortillaro, 2019). Enhancing further on these key concepts of multiple intelligence in 1985, the term of “Emotional Intelligence” was then conceptualised and introduced by Wayne Leon Payne in his dissertation “A study of emotion: developing emotional intelligence” (cited in Nita, 2014).

There were many that argued on these multiple intelligent concepts and termed it as radical in nature (Gayathri and Meenakshi, 2013). A plethora of these argument(s) and counter argument(s) laid a platform to deep dive and scout for benefits of emotions in real life, to also understand ways through which emotional intelligence can further develop in the near future. Research done by Gayathri and Meenakshi (2013) highlight the important difference between a feeling and an emotion as this perspective is an essential aspect to look upon while understanding the logic and patterns of EI. Equal weightage has also been given on the theory of evolution in EI and the four-branch model was initially introduced by Mayer and Salovey (cited in Gayathri and Meenakshi, 2013). The same has been descriptively spoken in the components of emotional intelligence section below.

According to a study conducted by Ashkanasy, Härtel, and Zerbe (2012), there is more to emotions and their relevance than just the workplace, as it has a lot more to offer in other areas of life as well. Certain key aspects that every individual at work is bound to experience is to have an appropriate sense of judgement. Be it a task given by the manager or certain untold tasks that are silent in nature, there are certain levels of expectations to be met while maintaining the quality standards on a professional front (Sandroto and Fransiska, 2021). There is a famous proverb by John Heywood’s that says “You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink”. In other words, you can offer someone a chance or point them in the right direction, but they must decide whether to accept it or not. Be it understanding emotions, managing expressions and the ability to compliment them reflects the level of emotional intelligence. It is hereby stated that EI can make the work place a happier environment and thus contributing to a positive effect on job satisfaction (Ashkanasy *et al.*, 2012). Employees that possess the potential of understanding and being proactive in all things can reveal better performance thus resulting into emotional development.

2.2.1 Components of Emotional Intelligence

As per Goleman (2017), EI comprises of various factors that includes **Self-control**: being able to identify the strengths and weaknesses that one has and the ability to value others by showing respect. **Social skills**: having the ability to be socially able to manage, motivate and being socially aware of things. **Situational skills** are having the ability to adapt as per the situation, may require courage to compromise yourself and prioritize or de-prioritize depending on situational awareness (Goleman, 2017).

Yadav and Mahmood (2015) elaborate on the four types of EI and segregated them into clusters as listed below:

- 1) **Self-Awareness** is hereby noted to identify the magnitude of understanding one has and the value for others. Limiting to this understanding, individuals may react or over-react inappropriately without realising the consequences that may occur. People that demonstrate a higher self-awareness tend to wisely and consciously react rather than being judgemental (Yadav and Mahmood, 2015).
- 2) **Self-Management** is also known as self-regulation and is the ability that is often seen in people having the determination to be head strong. These are qualities often seen in leadership level, they do not panic and are imperturbable. This is one of Goleman's strongest dimensions in the world of EI, be it a noxious situation, people that demonstrate a higher level of self-management capabilities will stand out by being calm and composed (Ikpesu, 2017). These skills set of been able to identify the opposite person's feelings, to have the patience of listening rather than being impulsive. Being open to a dialogue and willing to encourage positive behaviour are often the additional competency to these individuals.
- 3) **Self-Motivation** is seen in Individuals that can grow, have the determination and willingness to take up responsibilities. In contrast to people with low level of energy and laziness, unwilling to change, adapt to with new situations. The areas of competency observed are those with groups or individuals who take new initiatives and are visionaries (Manimozhi and Srinivasan, 2018).
- 4) **Relationship Management**

A study by Pipera, Militaru and Niculescu (2019), looks at managing relationships dealing with people appropriately and to develop empathy. People around you are continuously transmitting feeling or emotions and it is important to interpret them correctly to avoid disagreement. Nonverbal cues play a vital role such as body language, voice, facial expression, and eye contact while communicating or reacting. Be it personally or professionally, it is crucial to be mindful on how to speak, act, and use bodily gestures to manage relationships. These nonverbal indicators often work as incredibly expressive than verbal interactions (Pipera *et al.*, 2019).

2.3 Models of Social Intelligence

Among the many models developed on **Social Intelligence**, Albrecht's model appeals the most constituting a descriptive analysis in the word SPACE (Singhai, Malhorta and Patel, 2021).

S → it focusses on **situational radar** that has an ability to scan through situations and helps to determine a positive outcome.

P → it denotes a strong **presence** of an individual with higher self-confidence.

A → stands for **Authenticity** and is linked to self – honesty and to others.

C → speaks about **clarity** using clear concepts

E → it stands for being **Empathetic** that demonstrates the belongingness

Goleman's (2017) model spoke on the combination of biology and the power of brain that together contributes to the essence of Social Intelligence. He goes on to say that the "high road" is when a person uses their abilities to imagine, introspect, and turn on the neuro side of their brain. If, on the other hand, emotions are centered in thoughts, this is referred to as the "low road" (Singhai *et al.*, 2021).

Perspective “to” and “for” the international students

Hosting international students are meant to be critical towards the growing economy of most developed countries. Universities tend to significantly rely on tuition fees from overseas students because of measures like "internationalization,". So, it is also the universities obligation to make sure students are socially prepared to engage in the academic and working culture of the host country (Garson, 2016).

As argued by San Lam and O'Higgins (2012) they mentioned that the starting point for international students and the domestic is not the same, as the domestic students do not have adjustment issues as compared to newly arrived students. Due to these drawbacks, it is more difficult for pupils to compete with Irish students or students who have already studied abroad. More hours spent in the library will allow students to swiftly make up time lost. Many colleges offer additional assistance to the international students in these situations to help them compete (San Lam and O'Higgins, 2012). At all stages of this international transition experienced by students, it is also the prime responsibility of the college to be the fluid that combines the support needed to overcome the ongoing and future challenges faced by students.

Mentoring the students is an expectation in the heart of every student and matching this expectation is the social responsibility of the college. It is crucial to uphold a high standard of transparency in both the course syllabus and the interaction between the student and the lecturer. This level of ease sets itself apart from excellence in performance or ethnocentrism. It has been noted that many international students intend to get citizenship in the host nation; as a result, they frequently plan to spend in their own education overseas. They frequently anticipate that their professors or the connect they build in college would act as their mentors while giving them responsibilities that will help them advance their careers (Glass *et al.*, 2015).

The greatest strategy to indulge in gaining a diverse cultural experience and being socially involved is to promote cross-cultural learning with local pupils. It has also been suggested that difficulties in communication due to language limitations or differences in cultural norms could prevent local and overseas students from forming friendships (Trice, 2007). For these reasons it has been observed that international students often are more connected with international students from different country of origins as they are not accepted by local or domestic students.

2.3.1 Importance of social intelligence in emotional and cultural intelligence

Based on a study conducted by Ramsay, Jones and Barker (2007) that was praised by additional academics as well, it was discovered that the content of social support is divided into four groups.

- 1) Support on an emotional level - The sensation of value is emphasized and given top priority here. This is the most valued sensation since it fosters self-assurance in a person and inspires him to keep fighting the battle of achieving his primary goal of excelling in academics.
- 2) Support on a more practical level can have to do with budgeting for material expenses and making sure that necessities like food, clothing, and housing are kept up to date.
- 3) Giving the correct information or advising in terms of giving guidance is proven to be supportive during the adjustment phase of a new international student.
- 4) Social companion, spending time in need or talking or listening to your friend in times of need is also proved to be highly beneficial. Planning activities other than college or studies, especially when people at home are not available due to time difference are critical aspects of being socially supportive (Ramsay *et al.*, 2007).

2.3.2 An empirical theoretical development of multiple intelligence theory

There are many theorists that have mentioned about the three main perspectives of intelligence theory and them being social intelligence, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence (Singhai *et al.*, 2021; Gayathri and Meenakshi, 2013; Ng, Dyne and Ang, 2009). However, it was the rigorous work done by Crowne (2013) that gave light to the relationship between social, cultural and emotional intelligence.

They not only highlighted the fusion between these aspects but also proved that cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence are a subset to social intelligence (Crowne, 2013). Refer Figure 3 below that demonstrates the relationship between Social, Emotional and Cultural Intelligence.

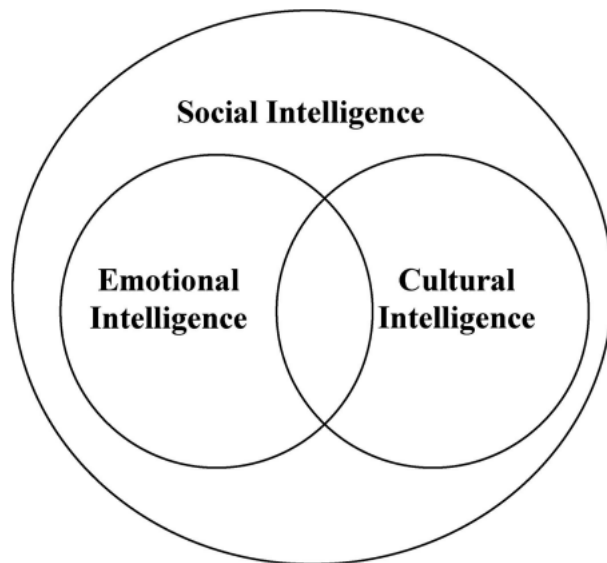


Figure 3: Social, cultural and emotional intelligence (Crowne, 2013).

In contrast to Crowne (2013), there were other research conducted with a possible negative effect on social aspects as well as emotional and cultural intelligence too. A similar study was conducted among medical students in Malaysia by Chew, Zain and Hassan (2015) wherein out of the 163 medical students surveyed, there were very little of a difference spotted among students from the 1st year and the final year. This study focuses on social management strengths that encourage students to interact with peer mentors or other active social groups. Today, there is a wealth of data that can be used to demonstrate the links between social management and academic records (Chew *et al.*, 2015).

Among the researchers of the 21st century, equal focus has also been given in measuring comprehensively the social development of overall aspects of an individual's cognitive (pertaining to more factual data), behavioural (tendency to adapt to new culture) and motivational (positive approach to fit in and apply practical knowledge) components (Kurpis and Hunter, 2017). In our study, we shall speak more about social developments of the main three dimensions of intelligence pertaining to international students. Finally, we shall also throw some light on evaluating the evidence in the relationship between EI and CQ, on doing so an understanding on inconsistency in the results will also be touched upon by using the Social Learning Theory (SLT) by Albert Bandura. SLT has been widely used to introspect the variance in a type of a skill and has also been proved to be highly scalable hence the need to collectively explore EI and CI was a crucial part of the study. Globalisation is yet another aspect

that cannot be ignored when it comes to socially adapting cultural intelligence (Michailova and Ott, 2018). In addition to the multiple models being built on social intelligence, there has been a growing level of encouragement in participation of international students. It includes participating in social activities like joining the college club, taking part in extracurricular activities like serving as a class representative, organising cultural events that can acquaint them with the new culture (Parker, Pettijohn and Rozell, 2011).

2.3.3 Dependency of cultural intelligence on improving social skills

It is critically important for an individual to practise the art of drawing positive reactions within its surrounding and simultaneously staying away from the negative reactions in a society. Significance is therefore given into an academic pedagogy among educators across recognised universities of UK to adapt cultural intelligence among international students (Mesidor and Sly, 2016). With the multitude of research done by Crowne (2008), the below figure 4 refers to the various way an international student already having exposure in the past can be higher in the overall cultural intelligence and its linkages on improving socially.

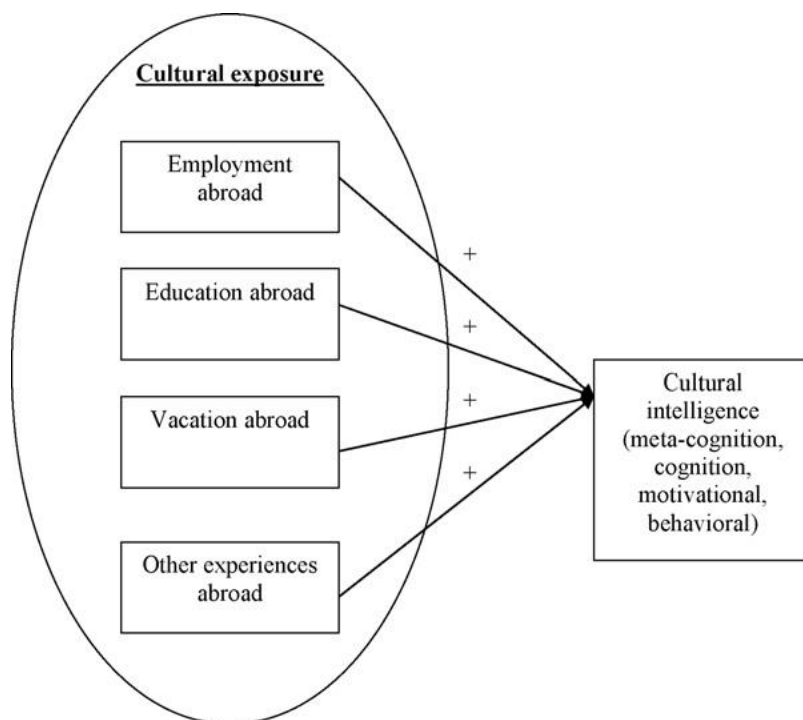


Figure 4: What leads to cultural intelligence? (Crowne, 2008).

The more an individual has spent time abroad, it eventually contributes to having a better exposure in doing things. So be it performing academically brilliant and involving in social aspects of the college, since there already has been an experience of doing bachelors study abroad can be vital to performing much better in masters course too. It stands true for matured students having a

strong professional background, if he/she has travelled abroad for business then having an international travel or living experience does matter in the long run. Notably, individuals that have travelled abroad for leisure purpose already are aware on the behavioral patterns or the do's and don't's of a mixed culture (Crowne, 2008).

Ambitious factors of motivation

There are multiple factors that motivates a search of an individual to become an international student. Among the many factors identified, there is a push and a pull mechanism that attributes towards making a stronger decision before applying to universities of a particular country. There are six factors that have been noted that are most prominent in the minds of a prospective international candidate (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The first factor is the knowledge and awareness of the educational level of the host country that is easily available through study consultants or any individual that has studied in the past (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The second factor is the recommendation that is provided by the relatives or friends that are already settled in that host country, this contributes exponentially in making a decision as there is a comfort factor of known people already residing abroad (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The third factor is more on finance, it includes tuition fee of the college, living cost, travel cost. While considering expenses, it is also critical to keep in mind the part time jobs that one will seek for after the arrival in the country. Every country that accommodates students allow international students to work on a part time basis (approximately 20 hours per week) during college working days and full time (40 hours) during Christmas or summer vacation (Mazzarol and Soutar,, 2002). The fourth factor is the climate, and this is the most challenging for international students especially if the weather of the home country is substantially different from the host country (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The fifth factor is the geographical proximity, this mainly is the time difference between the home and the host country and also the travel time from home to destination. The sixth factor is the social aspects that one has already developed with the humans already established themselves in the country, be it as a past student, an immigrant that has come via citizenship or jobs procured in foreign companies (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). These are the six "pull factors" that are highly influential towards motivating a decision making before planning to pursue their further education in a foreign country (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). To enjoy a seamless transition when handling the cross-cultural situations, it is crucial to evaluate these preparations. These factors cannot be overlooked because they demonstrate an individual's social skills and preparations for an unknown journey that can only be felt through experience; thus, research is an essential part of an international experience.

2.3.4 Awareness to emotional & spiritual intelligence

Formulating a more of a personal level of understanding is often a process that stresses “learning as a holistic process of adapting to the world that requires the integrated functioning of the total person, which includes thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving, as well as interactions between the person and the environment” (Ng *et al.*, 2009, p. 513). The point to be noted here is a focus on one’s belief and intending to be cautiously aware of situations and circumstances that can occur proactively and intelligently preparing to handle it. For Example – A key component of the various strategies that one needs to adopt is keeping track of the cost of things that are purchased on a more frequent basis. This is because intelligently planning a monthly budget in a new country can be difficult when getting used to the currency denomination, prices of groceries, and much more.

Religion being a strong aspect of Irish culture is also gaining popularity in the well-being of international students. Be it a catholic or a protestant church, or any other religious place like a gurudwara or a temple, these places of worship do act as a useful resource to maintain the spiritual upbringing of a person in need. Previous researchers have also noted that spiritual strength correlates with improved job performance, mental health, and resilience to do better (Mohamed, Singh and Subramaniam, 2020).

To deal with the multiple cohorts challenges that international student may face, universities are scheduling many value-added programs that can guide the incoming students in a more general aspect by trying to keep things more internationalising (Sutherland, Edgar and Duncan, 2015). For example, while the student is preparing to travel into a new country they are been made aware of the cultural of the host country like educating them about the weather, covid rules and regulations, giving them a glimpse of the college, sharing contact details of brokers for long term, short term, and budget friendly accommodations, giving a virtual tour of the college and lot more. These are few among the many initiatives that the universities today take up to comfort international students as this reduces the relocations stress and ensure the gap between cross cultural challenges in the classroom have been reduced (Koc and Turan, 2018).

To summarize and put things into perspective, all the arguments and counter arguments made by multiple studies done in the field of CI, SI, and EI shed a lot of light on excelling one's intra-personal skills, accepting the diverse cultural of the country you’ve relocated in, and the heavy reliance on social life. Crowne's collective work, which began in 2008 and continued until 2013, has been impressive, as the model of relationship has evolved over time. As a result of his research and studies, the combined effect of EI with CI, gives prominent assess to measure the depth of cultural exposure that will eventually allow access to identify and evaluate cultural differences that are

more prevalent among newly arrived international students. Additionally, Crowne (2013) has been stressing upon the empirical analysis of the three intelligences that puts together EI and CI as a subset to SI. The multiple theoretical developments and frameworks used by previous researchers have created a shift in the mindset of researchers when it comes to evaluating academic students especially international students. Here the word social intelligence is largely matched with social integration, example sociocultural or even emotional intelligence being a subset to social intelligence. With due respect to the enormous research done in these three dimensions, the work done by Rohan Thompson (2018) is most inspirational to the researcher of this study as it touches upon the phenomenon of intelligence pertaining closest to human experience in the journey of international students.

3 Research question

3.1 Aim:

The focus of this study is to a) Understand the concept of EI, SI and CI and b) Emphasise on the importance of social integration in the three broad areas with relation to international students in Ireland. Inspired by similar research conducted by Rohan Thompson (2018) wherein a similar study was conducted targeting international student in the United States of America using a lens of SI, CI and EI. The researcher of this study intends to selectively follow these footprints and conduct a similar study targeting international students in Ireland.

3.2 Primary objective:

The research objective is to identify effective factors, intelligence related outcomes and its possible consequences within a sample group of individuals, and they will be interviewed with respect to

- a) Freshers that have recently graduated at the bachelor's level in their own country and continued their academic journey to pursue their master's degree in Ireland.
- b) Professionally experienced or a matured students' ways of approaching to the new challenges in a new country.
- c) To evaluate the importance of development of International Experience in a student's life, and critically analyse the weaknesses that has been referred to as cultural, intercultural, and cross-cultural competencies (Finley, Hurt and Moore, 2017). In the bargain, highlights the strengths of social integration instead of limiting thoughts to social intelligence only.

The figure 1 below is a snapshot of the research objective that the researcher intends to fulfil by addressing the gap in the literature, the possible consequences and the related outcomes will be diagrammatically represented as a conclusion to this study.

Research objective

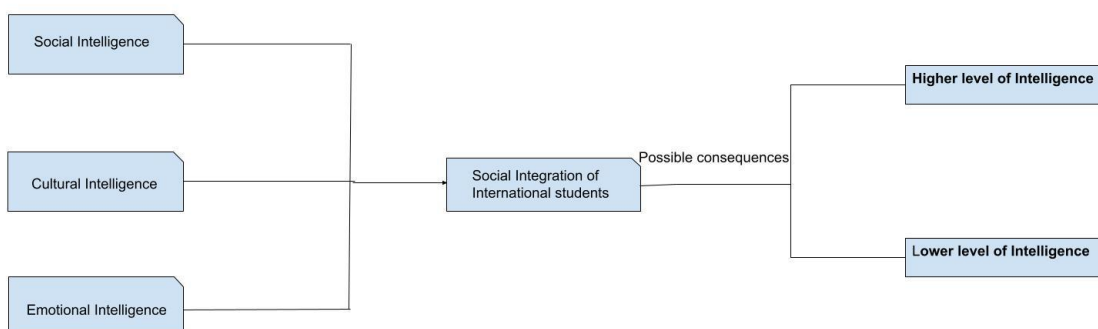


Figure 1 Source: Self

3.3 Secondary objective:

1. Has Covid19 worsened the existing challenges faced by international students in Ireland?
2. Will the need to quickly adapt to socially active elements in a student's life have impact on the SI, CI and EI?

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Purpose

Although the aim of this research is to highlight the initial struggle of international students and to enlighten them with the importance of Social Integration in Cultural and Emotional Intelligence, its purpose is more basic than applied. The secondary aim here is also expand the knowledge that already exists in the literature.

4.2 The Research Onion

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) introduced the Research Onion in 2007, has layers in the form of categories that were descriptively constructed to aid a researcher in developing the approach as illustrated in Figure 5 below.

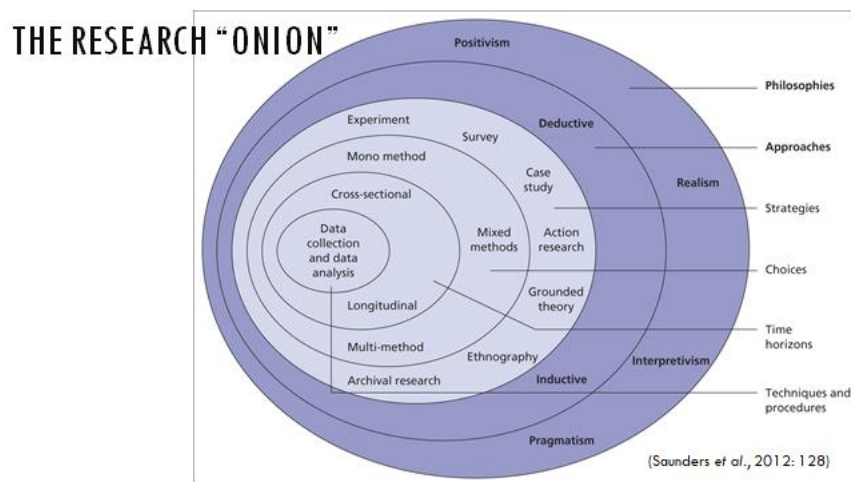


Figure 5: Research Onion (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

4.2.1 Research Philosophy (Layer 1)

The research philosophy to any study depends on certain processes that can be built on the choices made by the researcher depending on the subject and nature of the topic. Ontology, often known as the preferred lens through which reality is being demonstrated, reflects the viewpoint of the researcher. In the course of this process, the researcher also puts himself in a position to learn and build an in-depth epistemological understanding of the subject. As a researcher, you may also experience an axiological phase, in which you experience an internal feeling of self-contribution (Creswell, 2013). These are few of the choices that could be made during the research process, it also reflects the personality of the researcher while making these choices. Given that the researcher is interested in the subject's nuances and inquiry, interpretivism is typically a good choice for this study

(Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Pertaining to this study, the transcript of an interview will prioritize opinions, realities, sentiments, and experiences over any interest in numbers, the average, the total, or statistical data of any type.

4.2.2 Research Approach (Layer 2)

This is more of a follow-on to the selected research philosophy described in the above layer. The researcher to this study tends to take an inductive method, in which the interview-based data collection process is bundled up and then presented to incorporate deep-analysis of social, cultural, and emotional intelligence among international student in Ireland. The information gathered from the literature research will be utilized to refine the theory and to pinpoint its common and unique components (Benitez-Correa *et al.*, 2019). Based on the present research topic that the researcher is attempting to answer in this study, the focus is on the human experience and opinions; therefore, a semi structured data collection was concluded as the best one since it is more verbally based than numerical (Husband, 2020). Here, the interviewer has more control over the questions at hand, and the participant also has a tendency to be more outspoken and expressive. Since there is no time limit, it is much simpler to recognize thoughts and there is greater freedom during the conversation (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

4.2.3 Research Strategy (Layer 3)

Originally, this study was going to compare the intellect levels of domestic students and compare it to those of international students. However, the researcher found no significance for that category of data, therefore the comparative approach was dropped. Since it is not a survey and is not intended for a larger population, this study also cannot be said to as descriptive nor comparative as it is not numeric in nature. Another type of research strategy is experimental, this is more relevant to testing a person or a group of individuals and have no relevance on the present study that has been selected. Action research is when you believe the interviewees will gain anything from it or within a similar group of people (in this case, overseas students) will become better prepared after reading this article (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). With this approach, the researcher is not just seeking for extracts but is also concentrating on recognizing the participant's potential for diverse internal growth patterns. Action research could be either qualitative or quantitative, depending on the research question (Stavrou, 2021).

When a researcher develops a grounded theory, they often do it after reviewing the interview data and identifying any patterns. The researcher in this study discovered a component of merging social intelligence with emotional and cultural intelligence while analysing the literature on emotional, cultural, and social intelligence. This idea was amply supported by the initial interviews conducted; therefore, a new theory was beginning to take shape (Jamali, 2018). Additionally, this provided the

researcher with a chance to close another gap that might have been found throughout this investigation.

4.2.4 Research Choices (Layer 4)

The researcher can review the decisions made in the previous three layers in this part and decide whether to use a qualitative, quantitative, or hybrid approach. The key to the study is being purposeful when making decisions, which requires one to be selective. In this context, the researcher had initially planned to go with the hybrid approach but upon doing a deep dive on the literature pertaining to the research topic the idea of mixed method was eliminated. It is wiser to keep things simple rather than make them more complex, hence a survey form (also known as quantitative) was of less interest as it showed less value to the researcher and chose qualitative instead (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

4.2.5 Time Horizon (Layer 5)

Data will be collected at a single point in time because this study is more related to cross sectional research. In other words, since no data will be collected on a regular basis, it will be a one-time activity rather than a longitudinal one (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). The initial plan of the researcher was to do a longitudinal study in order to track the changes of events over time in the journey of international students, but due to time constraint the study was limited to cross sectional only.

4.2.6 Techniques and Procedures (Layer 6)

Analysing words rather than numbers is the intention hence the researcher has chosen qualitative approach to gauge some more deeper insights that could arise during a conversation or a discussion. A qualitative approach was finalised in this study so that the researcher can derive a holistic view and have a much better understanding of the target participants (international students in this case). Qualitative research methods give the participants a freedom of speech without any constraints on time. This will allow the researcher to gather the mindset of the participant and pen them down to precision (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Interviewing the international students and capturing their experiences since the day they landed in Ireland till date, this is in main intention that relates to the objective to this study.

4.3 Continuing to explore the methodology....

4.3.1 Interview based approach

A questionnaire-based approach as adapted by Schwarzenthal *et al.* (2019) was the initial plan by the researcher in this study, but basis these questionnaires the gravity of the topic could not be justified. The results of these questions will only give the researcher enough data for analysis whereas the evaluation of the objective of this study required more of an interview-based approach

(Schwarzenthal *et al.*, 2019). Here a purposive sampling having a set of pre-qualified filter criteria among international students was important to analyse from a wider perspective. It was hence necessary to be more selective and a filter-based question were derived in order to ensure that a diverse group of an individuals will be required, to validate their opinions and to meet the authenticity of this study (Kol *et al.*, 2021).

4.3.2 Demographic questions

In this section, the researcher had to be selective on choosing the right participant and thus ensuring an intellectual viewpoint across a diverse culture is captured. To do so, the researcher had to collect data basis the demographic question approach in order to initiate the purposive sampling approach (Thompson, 2018).

- Q1 Country of Origin
- Q2 - Age (this is to derive if they are from a millennial group or not)
- Q3 - Sex
- Q5 - Ethnicity
- Q6 – College name
- Q7 – Occupation
- Q8 - Level of work experience (this is needed to gauge the professional maturity level of an individual)
- Q9 – Number of countries visited for employment, education or leisure (this is to identify the level of CQ experienced)

The participants were shortlisted based on the researchers' discretion and the purposive sampling technique, ensuring a few important aspects such as country of origin, ethnicity, number of countries visited, and level of work experience. Here, not all participants visited multi countries, not all had an enormous professional work experience, but these elements were considered during the selection process. Not all international students that were interviewed belonged to the same country of origin. In total, students from seven colleges across Ireland have been interviewed to gauge differences in cultural, emotional and social aspects.

The researcher intends to grab various cultural experiences from international students hence has not limited the study to a single university. It was equally important to capture experiences from different cultural background hence participant selection had to be carefully and wisely shortlisted. The initial plan was to target the participants that are doing their bachelors study in Ireland but this study was then restricted to participants at the Masters level so that the maturity level could match to the QQI

Level 9 or Level 10. This was a crucial decision to make and the segregation was based on sole discretion of the researcher. As the recommended size range of the phenomenological study was in the range of 8-12, the researcher froze the participants to 12. The sample size of participants was selected with a motive that could enhance the validity of the study and could meet the ideology of the experience from international studies perspective.

4.3.3 Phenomenology

The main purpose of including this approach is to give freedom of speech to the participants and to be boldly vocal about their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Using this approach, the researcher is more interested in listening to a story or a scenario-based event that may have occurred that eventually adds value to this study (Jamali, 2018). While the subject matter is based on live events and facts, a deeper exploration is required to be gathered that can bring justice towards the intention including cultural and emotional belief towards the social integration of international students in this multi diversified life of Irish universities.

4.3.4 Participants

International students that are currently pursuing their master's degree are the sole participants for this study. Ensuring that the intent of this study is not lost and bridges the gap identified from previous studies, the researcher is focused on capturing the post pandemic experience and hence targeting international students that have made their way into Ireland post Covid 19 era. The participants chosen for this study have either entered Ireland pre-pandemic and experienced the online model of teaching or have come here in 2021 and have witnessed a hybrid model (online and offline). The targeted population for this study will be limited to selective set of international students from reputed universities in Ireland. To reduce the number of potential participants to a manageable number who might "purposefully" provide insight into the cultural differences between their home country and Ireland, a purposeful sampling technique was adopted. As the researcher belongs to the millennial group, including handful of participants that are in the range of age 26-41 could be insightful to this study. The point to be noted here is that all participants are now in the age bracket from 21 to 38 approximately.

4.3.5 Certain limitations

Since accessing full population (international students from all universities in Ireland) will not be accessible, a purposive sampling technique will be used in this regard. On doing so, the study will be limited to 12 international students from a unique nation and will try to capture a distinct university. In other words, the chosen participant will be from a different country but may or may not be from the same university. In this study, the researcher also wanted to take a longitudinal approach in order to

capture the experiences of international students at the end of each semester. This could have resulted in the growth pattern or certain trends for analysis. Also, while the number of participants in this study was limited to 12 hence students pursuing their master's degree were interviewed. But a much broader participation was required to access the depth of the nature of the topic. Because the study is limited to Ireland, it would have been ideal to include all colleges across the country, including counties such as Limerick, Cork, and Waterford, thus also including international students pursuing their bachelor's degree. It would also be ideal if the participants' countries of origin were drawn from the majority of European countries, as well as from the South and North American continents.

4.3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration holds high significance in research, especially if it is an interview-based approach wherein an individual or a group or individuals are involved as participants. During this study, the researcher had to be mindful of three aspects 1) Using Microsoft Teams for online interview (if any) and 2) Ensuring the experiences shared are correctly transcribed. 3) Taking an approval from the participant to record the interview (for reference purpose). It has also been informed by the researcher to the participants that there exist no prints outs nor any hard copies of the transcripts of the interviews taken. The transcripts were shared with the relevant participants to validate the data, and if the participants felt that certain aspects need to be modified or deleted the necessary changes would have been done, this technique is known as respondent validation. Before the interview was initiated, all the participants were informed that the recordings captured during the interview will be deleted once the master's accreditation is done (Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin, 2007). For confidentiality purposes, no names of the participants will be taken during the study, instead all the participants will be referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2...Participant 12 throughout the findings and discussions of this study.

The researcher read through the ethical guidelines and procedures published by the National College of Ireland as the research involved interviewing human participants, international students in this regard.

4.3.7 Pre-Interview preparations

Before even conducting an interview, the targeted participants were contacted via a phone call and the comfort level to speak on this study was gauged. The purpose of this exercise was required so that each interview was approached with a clear and a fresh perspective and thus bringing out a more modest conversation than desired. As per Moustakas (1994), this is also known as "epoche" attitude wherein debarring from making any judgement is made easier rather than presuming it.

It is critically important that a boundary is set here to maintain the standards and quality of the conversation and hence relative interview questions are supposed to be drafted. Emphasizing on the first-time international student experience in Ireland is to be highlighted, mainly touching upon elements of emotional and cultural intelligence on life skills and social aspects is also the key purpose of this study. The questions were being framed that were leading to an open-ended discussion with the participants so that an in-depth information could be captured supporting the purpose of this study. The researcher does not intend to stretch the interview for more than an hour but at the same time wants to be a good listener to the participant and even if the timeframe exceeds to more than an hour it would not be of an issue, ensuring the essence of interview is well understood and neatly documented so as to avoid any understanding gaps that may arise if a time clock is kept on ticking.

4.3.8 Critical Incident Technique

The researcher additionally used critical incident technique (CIT) as a systematic method for eliciting from first-hand witnesses, qualitative information about noteworthy situations. Researchers can better understand the essential circumstances for individuals, processes, or systems with the help of this technique. Due to the exploratory nature of the investigation, this technique was determined to be pertinent. The critical incident technique was found to be helpful because it also ensures that the researcher is capturing the satisfaction and dissatisfaction level of international students during the scenarios they have been a part of or the incidences they have witnessed during their journey (Swanson *et al.*, 2021).

4.3.9 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot interview dated 22nd July 2022 with two participants basis the purposive sampling technique that was initially decided upon. This was an experimental trial activity basis the questions that were initially validated (Alloh, Tait and Taylor, 2018). Post the two interviews', the researcher realised that two of the six main questions needed a revisit and introduced question number seven and eight. The two modified questions were updated along with relevant changes in the supportive questions too. The newly introduced two question was more like a rating question that was drafted, making the participant think on the various perspective that were kept in mind during the interview, hence requested the participant to rate the self-experience on the social, emotional and cultural perspective on the overall growth since their arrival in the country.

4.3.10 Interview Schedule

Researcher has interviewed 12 international students spread across 6 recognised universities in Ireland. Each of the selected participants were asked questions based on their overall living, work and academic experience that helped them grow emotionally, culturally and socially since their arrival in Ireland. Questions were categorised basis topics related to academic experience, work environment, people management, environment related that points out their struggles, challenges, pros and cons that were witnessed. The questions were bifurcated into two categories, one was the main questions and the second were sub questions that supported to the main questions. The thought of main question and supportive questions were included so that the structure of the interview is solidified, and the essence of the conversation is active.

Main question 1

Would you be able to highlight on few incidents on how you had to adjust in the culturally different environment in Ireland?

Supportive questions:

- Academically in particular as that is the reason you are here.
- How did you experience sharing your living space at your accommodation?

Main question 2

Can you please highlight on your relation with other international students in comparison to Irish student and with students from your own country of origin?

Supportive questions:

- What is your belief of differences in opinion?
- How would you resolve it?
- Were there any major transformations you had to do in particular to shape up your journey in college?

Main question 3

Did you manage to get a part time employment easily or were there challenges you faced as you were not an EU citizen?

Supportive questions:

- Do you feel you found a job of your choice or was it a compromise?
- How different is the working culture here in comparison to your own country?
- Do you feel any difference in your approach towards work since the time you started working and now?
- What aspects do you feel you have grown as a person?

Main question 4

Do you have any motivational experiences to share that your countrymen could be inspired by? Would recommend them to experience the Irish culture?

Supportive questions:

- Can you please throw some light on social aspects living in Ireland?
- Would you recommend students to partake in the journey same as yours? Why?

Main question 5

If you had to rewind and take time to the day you landed in Ireland, how could you have been better prepared to have had the Irish experience?

Supportive questions:

- What did occur to have made this change?
- How did you react at that very moment?
- Could you have got the necessary help had you been in your country?

Main question 6

What has been your growth pattern or changes in maturity level from cultural, social and personal aspects?

Supportive questions:

- What stories define changes in the social aspect of your life living in Ireland?
- What is the strongest cultural change you would like to share for future students?

- Tell me that one personal change in you that has matured as an individual?

Main question 7

On the scale from 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how much would you rate yourself on you being a) socially intelligence b) emotionally intelligence and c) culturally intelligent?

Main question 8

Between the three dimensions of Intelligence, what would you give more preference too? Also prioritize them in sequence of importance to in perspective of an international student.

4.3.11 Demographic table

Table 1: Demographics of participants

Participant	Country of origin	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	College	Current occupation	Level of work experience	Number of countries visited
1	Nigeria	24	Female	African	NCI	Healthcare	2 years	2
2	Ghana	26	Female	African	NCI	Healthcare	4 years	3
3	Turkey	29	Female	Middle East	NCI	IT	8 years	16
4	Brazil	25	Female	South American	NCI	Hospitality	2 years	4
5	Argentina	37	Male	South American	NCI	Warehouse	12 years	8
6	Mexico	24	Female	North American	UCD	Retail	2 years	2
7	Pakistan	28	Male	Asian	Maynooth	Retail	2 years	2
8	Guyana	23	Male	South American	Griffith	Retail	2 years	3
9	Spain	30	Male	European	DBS	Construction	4 years	4
10	India	24	Male	Asian	NUIG	Retail	1 year	2
11	Italy	23	Male	European	Trinity	Retail	1 year	2
12	Dubai	22	Female	Middle East	Trinity	Retail	1 year	2

List of abbreviations used in the table above

NCI – National College of Ireland

UCD – University College Dublin

DBS – Dublin Business School

NUIG- National University of Ireland, Galway

5.1 Analysis

The researcher depends heavily on the questionnaires drafted to directly interact with the chosen international students. Specific information about deriving the strengths and weaknesses of the students were asked. The data from the interview were grouped into emergent themes as a result, enabling the researcher to conduct a thorough study of the data using a thematic analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). It also involved conceptual analysis framework to understand the relevance and culminate the criticality of the emerging themes (Watson *et al.*, 2022). The researcher used a theoretical framework to draw relations between CI, SI and EI, both in isolation and together. This helped the interview questions to have a logical flow and ensured smoothness while conversing during the course of the interview.

Every interview that was conducted was also recorded (for reference purposes) using a voice recorder feature of the mobile handset. Each of the recordings were then transcribed and documented in excel so that relevant themes could be well constructed and segregated them into categories. Since the interviewer asked questions to the international students in an orderly manner it was easier to categorise them into a single qualitative table. During a cursory glance of the identified data, there were multiple similarities that were observed, and it felt like an echoic response by some of the international students. Since the researcher and the subjects were both international students, the feelings were mutual and were simple to connect when the transcripts were analysed.

5.2 Findings

There were six males and six females that participated in this study. With the help of purposive sampling, the researcher ensured a diverse experience is captured in this study and hence international students among 12 different countries that were spread across 7 different colleges were selected as participants. This not just bought variety on the table but also considered the time zone aspect from the participants country of origin that was necessary to capture (Pope, Roper and Qualter, 2012). As most of the international students were pursuing their education at the master's level, it bought a lot of maturity in their thoughts.

To demonstrate the inclusiveness of this study, the gender of the participants was given equal weightage, so half of the participants were males, and the other half were females.

Emerging Themes

As the researcher structured the research and interview questions around the three important dimensions of intelligence (social, culture, and emotions), the emerging themes had to address these aspects as well. The results of the interviews generated four themes-

5.2.1 Theme 1 – The Culture Shock!!

Weather

Geographical conditions greatly support any nation's culture by indicating basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. This was a common concern among all participants when it came to adjusting to a new cultural setting such as Ireland. All the 12 participants had initial issues coping with the climatic conditions, participant 1,2,7,10 and 12 mentioned that weren't habituated wearing thick clothes as they belonged to nations wherein it was hot almost 80% of the times in their countries. Participant 1 said

"Wearing thick clothes and then a jacket, then putting on the hand gloves, then wearing on a mask due to covid-19 was a horrifying experience. And this is even if I had to go to the nearest supermarket to just get milk for a cup of coffee in the morning".

Participant 2 then explained her discomfort and her inability to go to college due to the cold, so she participated in lectures via online mode.

"We had only five lectures (three hours each) that were online and one lecture of two hours that was offline, this was a weekly schedule. Due to covid-19 restrictions, a hybrid mode of lecture was prepared by the college, and waking up in cold winters, taking a shower, preparing breakfast, and dressing up to travel was a never-ending exercise. I compromised and avoided doing all of this by sitting at home and attended all the lecture online. As a result, I was able to complete all my daily morning activities while the lecture was going on and because my camera was turned off, I was muted too this was easily manageable. Once the I got used to the climatic conditions, I began attending more lectures in college and didn't misuse the initial comfort zone I was in"

To adjust with the climatic conditions in her initial days, Participant 2 tried to find a mid-way to balance between not missing lecture and fought through the initial difficult times of adjusting to the weather. This also shows a positive approach taken by the participant by not compromising on studies but smartly utilizing the benefits of online lectures.

Food

To survive anywhere across the globe, need an individual to have a staple food, and that is favourable to one's taste buds. As per Participant 11

"Food in Ireland is bland and is all about potatoes and potatoes everywhere, mashed or fried and the meat too was not very fresh. I am used to spicy food with lots of spice and fresh food. We had vegetable farm across our homes and hence the vegetables here looks dried to me."

Participants 1,2,3,7,10 and 12 also had a similar view as they were from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, as a result they were used to having spicy meals. They discussed the benefits of living in Ireland, citing the opportunity to sample authentic dishes such as tasty pastas and pizzas from Italy, Turkish tea, Irish scotch, and many complimented the delicious types of croissants that were ideal and cost-effective for breakfast.

Language

For few international students having English not their native language faced lots of understanding issues. Almost all participants faced a huge difference in culture due to the thick Irish accent in almost all places, be it college or at work. It was difficult to understand and reciprocate to not just the Irish accent but also the accent by other Europeans. A work experience highlighted by Participant 4 said

“A polish could not understand what a French is saying, and a French could not relate to statements made by an Italian. I being a Muslim had a hard time to listen, understand and speak to people of different dialects but eventually using signposts or with the help of google translate feature started communicating better”

The above experience shared by a Muslim individual exemplifies his never-say-die attitude. Despite initial difficulties, particularly with communication issues, the overall use of social platforms for assistance. It just goes to show that resources are plentiful; the key is to be aware of how to use them. Google played an important role in his learning experience and treated his concern about the language barrier as a blessing.

Experience

It is obvious that differences in culture can be surprising and equally shocking in nature. Participant 10 commented on the weirdest cultural experience that was never envisaged

“I researched a lot before coming to Ireland for master’s level course, spoke to so many of my people that were of my own country on various ways to prepare before coming to a new country. But I was totally unaware that there is no provision of a jet spray in the toilet and had to use tissues instead. I just couldn’t digest this bit until I witnessed it myself.”

These are a few things that may be overlooked when preparing to relocate to a new environment or culture. There is always something new in store for an individual to discover, and it must be shared so that it does not come as a surprise to others.

Another cultural experience witnessed by a participant doing her part time in healthcare mentions, participant 2 says

“It was so new for me to see old people living in a nursing home at their old age and is even more weird to see their children coming to visit them almost every day. I firstly can’t understand why an old person needs to be in an aged home instead of her own home and why don’t the kids take care of their parents or grandparents. In my country, we don’t have the concept of a nursing home and hence when I see these two sides of the coin, I get even more confused”

Recalling her main motivation to relocate to a European country was particularly for a better lifestyle, she said

“Earning in euro’s was my primary goal after spending more than a decade in my country, I earned but at the end of the day could not manage to save enough. Hence I decided to give a shift to my career and decided to upgrade my academics which also gave me a platform to enter Ireland and earn in euro’s. It also provides additional two years of visa to work full time and find a sponsorship for future job opportunities and become an EU citizen.”

All participants have that one reason as to why they have chosen Ireland as their favourable destination to do their master’s. But it is these experiences that matter the most, in comparison to earning in euros or other hidden motivations that cannot be publicly expressed. These initial cultural shocks helps them to grow as culturally stronger person, which gives them a sigh of relief that they have won the situation they are in by adapting to it. Also, these experiences are vital to share as it acts as a checklist in the minds of the prospective international and helps them to better understand the change in culture which eventually may get them moving closer to combating the forthcoming difficult situation of life.

5.2.2 Theme 2 - Developing Emotional strength

Self-growth

Being a responsible international student means focusing on academics first and foremost; everything else is secondary but equally important to cope with being emotionally strong and required for self-development. There were certain international students that came to Ireland before the pandemic struck and had to fight this battle without the support of family. Participant 4 and 5, both being from south American continent had come to Ireland to learn English and both had their experiences to share with tears in their eyes. Participant 4 said

“Financially the government of Ireland supported me but mentally it was extremely tough. I had to self-motivate myself and my roommate as she was more depressed than me. We both had to gulp our tears as we knew it is time to be head strong and learn to assess the situation better. As time passed by,

things started getting better and we began to feel distressed, but we learnt the tenacity to be patient and overcome our fears. Focus has to be the journey and not the goal is one of the key aspects that helped us see every morning one day at a time”

Participant 5 on the other hand was more casual and already very encouraging in looking at challenges, he says

“Entering Ireland for me was a blessing in disguise as I saved money for my master with the financial support received by the Irish government. As I was working in retail, I was occupied with my part time job on frequent basis as and when required. As I was already learning English, I began focussing on improving my interpersonal skills that has made me a much stronger human being.”

Experience shared by Participant 9 is more focussed, organised and motivational. The same participant shared his views on self-understanding and being calm while in panic situation. He said

“Even while at work, due to language barriers I could not understanding basic work-related tasks given to me. My manager used to tell me to do X and I used to end up doing X-Y. It was so frustrating as I just couldn’t communicate well but that is when I took it easy. While on my break, I took help from my colleagues that understand my language and tried to understand from them the things that I am expected to do, this helped me drastically and I began to meet the expectations of my manager”

All students found it very challenging to adapt to the new world, filled with restrictions and limitations with pandemic still at its peak. These experiences add relevance to the research question of this study by capturing the situations through which these international students went through while they were away from their loved ones and had to fight the emotional, financial and social battle.

Assessing things situationally

Inefficiencies in way to communicate can mislead a human experience, so be a new international student or any common man it is critically important to understand the nuances of the situation and react accordingly. One such incident highlighted by Participant 12 gives a mixed feeling on how to culturally adapt and assess the gravity of the situation and not mislead into words. She spoke

“I began working on the tills of a retail shop and I found it extremely shocking when my colleagues at work used to greet me by saying hi love, the same words were at times used by the customers. The word love in my country was meant to have a different meaning but then when I read few knowledge article online about how the Irish people greet, I immediately realised it is a very common and a casual way”

At times non-verbal cues, body language or gestures often denotes a message, but it is also important to evaluate the situation you are in and accordingly make sense of the verbal interactions among people.

Learning never ends

Motivation is essential to reach heights that no one has reached before or when an individual is attempting to do something new. Participant 6 indicates on self-motivation experience and how she socially adapted herself to get better over time. She spoke

“Studying for me was simply memorizing answers and writing the theory basis the questions asked during the examination was the only format of assessment I was aware of. But here it was a 360-degree transformation for me when I was told no answers were incorrect, instead you had to justify the theory basis your readings from textbooks or journal articles. Every sentence had to be backed up via a reference, this style of studying was tough but thanks to the library team, the never give up attitude I have within me I achieved my academic writing skills and was graded excellent. Additionally, evaluation was purely on individual or group assignments in comparison to the Question-and-Answer exam format I had in my country. I also got great exposure with other international students by doing group studies with them and exchanging ideas, discussions that help me be socially more active from the shy person I was.”

In case of an international students, having to cohere with academic challenges, especially when he/she comes from a background wherein giving credits to authors is uncommon or new. Certain participants found it impossible to attain the skill of academic writing by including references of authors as they initially felt it may break their thoughts. But it now they feel the value addition of being skilled in academic writing and the importance of in text citation and references.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Social Management

Living experience

As Ireland is a part of the European union, it is a given that it welcomes citizens from countries like Spain, Italy, Portugal and other European countries to live, work and study with freedom. Participant 12 expresses certain incidents of her living experiences that was a surprise to the beginning of her social life but eventually blended well. She says

“Coming from the middle east, it was a surprise to see the youth in the city wearing clothes that doesn't cover the entire body as girls in my country even wear a burka at home. And then the tattoos more visible than the clothes on their body. I knew I had to change my ways of living and not bother about

other attires or their perspective of life. Dublin is a cosmopolitan city and very modern so I will have to accept witnessing people of similar dressing styles and move on.”

Participant 8 recalls his living experience with his flatmates and share incidents that was unacceptable to him, he speaks

“Living-in with your partner before the sacrament of holy matrimonial was unacceptable for me, but when I noticed my flat mate sharing the room with his partner, trust me it was so uncomfortable initially. I used to most of the time is not at home and began avoiding to face them, I even started to look for other accommodation but couldn’t find any. I eventually realised I had to change as living-in is a very common aspect of gelling into the social aspect of life and it is a personal choice, I just had to respect it.”

Participant 3 commented on the extremist part of the social aspect of living in Ireland, she highlighted

“I have visited 16 countries till date for secondary education, bachelor’s, leisure and business but have never witnessed the clubbing and the drinking culture elsewhere other than Ireland. Here hopping from one club to another during any get togethers is so common. People just buy a drink and celebrate every possible moment of life with cheers so very often. Drinking was an occasional thing for me but now it is a weekend thing.”

The scenarios and lived experiences presented above demonstrate the sociocultural aspect and the impact it can have on an individual's or, in this case, an international student's mindset.

Academic experience

Participant 3 believed that she had to put a lot of efforts into being socially active if she had to achieve her dreams of scoring 1:1 (70% grade overall). She mentioned that

“I was a shy person and used to have filters in my mind even before speaking a word. I had to draw courage to ask my doubts in the classroom with so many international students of which I knew none. I had to break the ice, be brave and take a leap into the fire to maximize the gaps towards my success. I am proud to be a class representative and a part of the Uni Buddy program wherein I was responsible to brief new international students into the campus and welcome them.”

Participant 10 also recalled his experience wherein he mentions that

“I was a poor listener and would always intervene into others conversation as I wanted to put my thoughts across, but here I knew I had to change this part of me. Here, in the Irish culture being respectful among people is the most crucial way to be a part of the conversation and if I had to be a part of a group, I had to be a very good listener.”

It just goes to show the importance of realization and being persistence in changing for the better definitely pays off in the long run. The above experiences reflect on high level of intelligence and the willingness to firstly identify the modifications needed in an individual and then changing as per the requirements of the situation.

Working experience

Participant 12 recalls the importance of being punctual, he shares

“In my country, if we get an invite for a get together and have to reach at 8pm, we generally start to get ready at 8pm and by the time we reach its like 9pm or even 10pm. That’s the basic assumptions and it is pretty much casual even at work, it’s no big deal. But here, being at work at 8am means reaching work by 7:45 and clocking in at sharp 8am. I learnt my lesson of being punctual and respecting other’s times the hard way”

Participant 4 also shares a similar view but more to do with communication, she shares

“People say thank you, sorry and use the word grand, way too much. Earlier she was surprised why do people say bye, bye, bye, bye so many times in just one sentence. A one-time usage of the word bye will not change if used multiple times. Same goes with grand, it took a google search to articulate the real meaning of the word Grand”

The traditional values created by our forefathers still stand strong when it comes to being respectful to another or even if it means respecting the value of time. There is a famous proverb that states time and tide waits for no man, this also means if an opportunity is lost it will never return that easily. The participants in the above scenarios pays importance to time and gestures, both very important aspects that relates to the constructs of this study.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Alt + H = Help

Always ask when in doubts, many such quotes are often noticed in classrooms, library and even in the cafeteria of the colleges. Participant 5 elaborates and gives credit to these quotes as he tasted improvements in various aspects of the academic journey. He spoke

“Paraphrasing, referencing, and making sense to the literature review was a tough task at the beginning. But thanks to the library team and the multiple seminars organised by the colleges, academic writing and the Harvard referencing style became an easy task.”

On a similar note, but on the religious aspect, participant 8 expressed his gratitude and found peace while spent time in prayers. He shares

“I was staying in an environment where no one chose to speak with me, may be because of my colour or may be because of I was slow in doing things, don’t know. But at times, I felt I was facing challenges with myself and was emotionally low in confident. Due to the different time zone, my family could not give me enough time and I was struggling to give them time too. Here, I began to spiritually enlighten myself by visiting the nearest church on daily basis and asked for help from the priest. He suggested me to participate in social gatherings like distributing food at the city centre, and in lots of other activities as organised by the community. As time passed by, I started gaining confidence in myself and my relations with others improved drastically.”

Very inspirational experience shared here wherein the participant scouted for resources for help, and indeed changed the person and got him to develop conversations, kept himself busy and made him happier as a human.

Participant 10 shares his experience on the financial aspects during the academic journey. He spoke

“Covid-19 was at its peak, and I was also a victim. At those days I was working part time as I also began supporting my family in Africa. And then one fine day in January 2022, I was detected covid positive and had to stay indoors for 14 days. I was worried that my weekly pay would be affected and would have to ask for money from my home. Keeping the exchange rate in mind, my family had to send millions to support my living expenses, but it was the Irish government that provided me with financial support of 350 euros that helped me manage my expenses at the times when I needed it the most”

These are certain privileges of being a student of an economically strong country. Here, the law in the country turned out to be a useful asset to international students that supported their financial needs during Covid-19 crisis.

6 Discussions

In terms of the CI aspect to this study, when participants were asked to comment on cultural difficulties, they identified the Irish weather as their first challenge upon arrival in the winter. They are ready to face the upcoming winter because they have survived extreme winters in the past few months. These findings support the work of Le *et al.* (2020), as they identify a culturally strong human being with a higher level of metacognitive CI. In contrast to these participants, there were a few who identified a middle ground to combat these climatic conditions and resemble the work done by (Mokhothu and Callaghan, 2018) and (Li and Middlemiss, 2022) having stronger propensity, ability to be a smart worker showing high levels of cognition in behaviour. These participants demonstrate stronger life skills by smartly handling the situation in a better way or by dealing with the weather by being well prepared in advance and hence they did not identify weather a mighty challenge. One of the participants belonged to a place with weather similar to Irish weather, so it was an easy adaptation process for him hence this cannot be related to having cognitive or metacognitive CI for that particular participant.

Bringing focus to motivational CI, the experiences shared not just highlights the benefits of becoming an international student, or an academic boost in their studies but also has future plans of being an EU citizen. This is known to be an easier route for international students to settle abroad as by investing in education gives access to perks like part time employment during academic studies and full-time employment during vacations. These have been highlighted in previous studies by (Li and Middlemiss, 2022; Crowne, 2008:2013). It is a known fact that such programs introduced by the government are enticing to prospective international students, these act as appealing opportunities for even working professionals that intent to settle abroad. Six among the twelve of the participants chosen for this study were from the millennial group, age ranging from 25 to 40 and they also happen to be experienced professionals that worked in their country for more than 5 years. Their shift in career paths and pursuing masters in Ireland are certain ways that they seek a future in this country and wish to become Irish citizens. Countries like UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other European countries like Germany, France and others are more welcoming with benefits for international students by also providing them with scholarships on tuition fee, rent reduction on accommodation for students that cannot afford living expenses and much more. These schemes introduced by various countries are not just a boost to the economy of their country but a boon for prospective international students too. The above has been highlighted and discussed in previous studies by Ikpesu (2017) as it brings a sense of judgement in an individual to find ways to help himself in the form of planning for a better future by making certain modifications in life.

Anticipating a situation is an art of being skilled or having better access to the situation and hoping that things will eventually improve either through situational awareness or having a stronger social network. It can also refer to having put yourself in a strong position where the things around you can be taken care of with others help or the problems that surround you can eventually be managed automatically (either or). All the international students in Ireland gave immense credit to the Irish government for financially supporting them during the peak months of pandemic and even through the second and third wave. There were instances wherein few participants came to Ireland in early 2019 to learn English and had to be in the country throughout Covid-19. At these critical times, they were financially supported by ways of allowances that could take care of all their basic needs like rent, food and medical expenses. Many other international students landed in 2021 and testified that when they were detected with Covid-19 during their academic journey, they too were paid allowances to manage their medical needs, this also included free covid test kits, masks, sanitisers provided by colleges. These findings provide evidence to support work done by Goleman (2017), it relates to having situational and social skills to be more patient, relaxed and to assess things more efficiently. It also complements the work of Schlegel and Mortillaro (2019) in these areas by positively responding to situations, being able to overcome difficulties, and eventually dealing with the situation by having an advantage on EI.

Pandemic worked well for some people and had worse implications for most but there were individuals that also gained from the situation. There were two participants that came to Ireland with an intention to learn English as it was not their native language. They identified the importance of upscaling themselves and to do more in life as they had faced lots of issues due to language barrier. Be it travelling for leisure or just have a casual interaction it was getting into their nervous as they were losing on the moment due to language constraint. Ireland is the one country in Europe wherein English is largely spoken, unlike in other European countries like Spain wherein Spanish is widely used or in France wherein French is also prominently used by most people. Hence it is observed that most of the EU citizens prefer Ireland as their most preferred destination to learn English. These two participants had their fortune changed as they were living in Ireland during the pandemic, they expressed gratitude to the Irish government for supporting them financially as they utilised the excess funds saved to self-sponsor their masters. The experience above can be co-related to the work done by Joneja (2016), Nita (2014) and Riggio and Reichard (2008) related to the theory on multiple intelligence model by Howard Gardner. These challenging and very tough situations were smartly managed and denotes high level of intelligence that leads to transformation of human experiences. There have been many that have struggled and went back to their countries as they could not face these challenges due to low level of handling interpersonal skills that includes self-motivation and self-management.

Complimenting the work mentioned by Manimozhi and Srinivasan (2018) and Goleman (2017) along with the study by Mokhothu and Callaghan (2018) brings together the sociocultural intelligence in international students. Here the willingness to deal with new experiences, even if they are negative or unacceptable at first, but then adapting to the situation and culture, is also observed and is highly related. Be it masters-level academic writing or being a good listener during lectures by adapting to note-taking abilities for self-reference, there are certain self-responsibilities that one must learn in order to be skillful. It is said that learning has no boundaries, and that the online literature available today is limitless.

In continuation to the above self-learning discussion, cross cultural learning is the greatest strategy to indulge in gaining a diverse cultural experience and being socially involved. Trice (2007) brings together the importance of dwelling in relationship management among the locals and more towards the other international that are sailing in the same boat. Pipera *et al.* (2019) conducted a similar study on relationship management, emphasizing the equivalence of selecting the right words while communicating in the right tone and addressing situational awareness challenges that are sometimes overlooked.

Few participants highlighted on the modifications they had to do in order to meet their primary goal of scoring well in college, also stressed upon the fact that they gathered strong courage on experiential learning. These disciplinary changes included developing their minds to build mental algorithms so as to foster new culture and be equally successful. It also links to another aspect of motivational CI that seeks to gain cross cultural experience for self-growth. The cultural acceptance or changes in an individual's perspective described above are strongly related to the views of (Ng et al., 2009) and (Sutherland et al., 2015). Here the participants that narrated their success stories while speaking on adapting cross cultural differences reflected on their assumptions and belief and they feel they are a better human being today.

The international students that participated in this study also shared their perspectives on punctuality and time management as it has high relevance on social management. When it comes to commitment, time is an important factor that can make or break relations, be it sales in a customer service industry or adhering to your shift timings at your workplace, participants stressed upon the importance of time management in comparison to the past experiences in their country. Same goes with gestures, or nonverbal cues, one participant critiqued herself on the ignorance of research done while experiencing difficulties in understand certain key words most commonly used in Irish culture. She later realised that being socially connected with search engines is critical especially when one is in the midst of

experiencing new culture. The above two occurrences shared coincides the viewpoints with (Michailova and Ott, 2018) and co-relates with the Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura.

Limited research has been observed in spiritual intelligence, particularly by providing essence in the overall journey of international students. According to one of the experiences shared by the participants, when it comes to a lack of materialistic resources, spiritual assistance is the most important. The viewpoint in Mohamed et al. (2020) shares the improvement in any individual's altered state of mind and relates this to the evidences in the findings that this is true.

7 Conclusion

Evaluating the importance of SI, CI, and EI on the academic journey of international students in Ireland is the main aim of this study. The researcher discovered that multiple theorists had already proposed patterns of human behavior through surveys and interviews wearing the intelligence lens, and concluding that certain aspects of the research questions were influential while others did not meet the goal of their study. Keeping their perspectives in mind, the main aim of this study was to highlight the experiences via interview based approach that contributes to the knowledge of a prospective student doing his/her research before selecting Ireland as their destination for further education. Glimpses of these experiences have been descriptively narrated in this dissertation's findings section. As we are in the post-pandemic era, all of the real-life experiences shared by the participants are relevant to the current situation; primarily, these experiences were shared during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Participants chosen for this study were ranging from age 22 to 38, this extensive variety gives a chance for two sets of prospective international students to be a part of Irish universities. First, the freshly graduated candidates that wish to pursue their masters degree in Ireland and secondly the working professionals (that are increasing in number), that have considerable work experience and they feel masters degree could boost their career paths. While discussing these experiences in the discussion chapter, the researcher kept the main three dimensions (EI, SI, and CI) to be the focus point. Throughout this research journey, capturing the international experience of students was critically important, and thus figure 1 (introduced in Research question chapter) began to evolve into figure 6. The newly formed figure 6 took the desired shape and it now reflects to the relationship between SI, CI, and EI, as well as the levels of intelligence (higher and lower), and the importance of social integration amongst international students in Ireland.

Conclusion: Redefining multiple intelligence by centering the relevance of social integration of international students

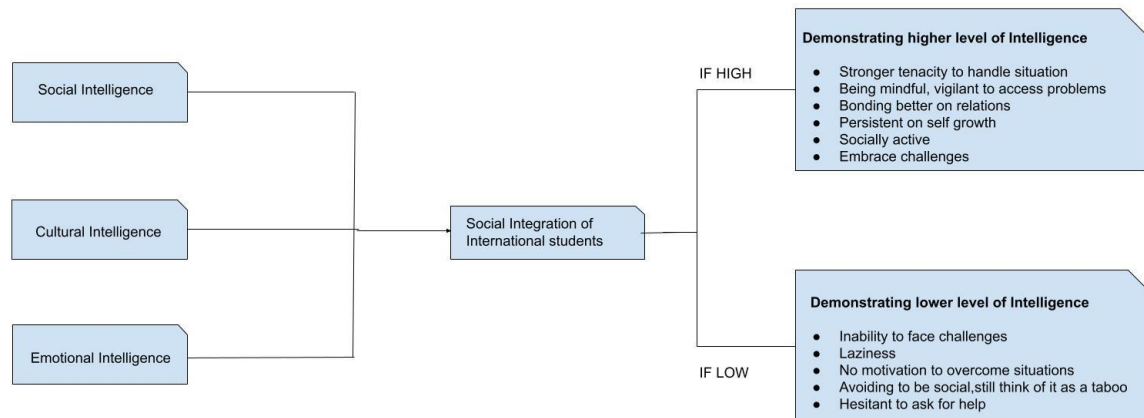


Figure 6 Source: Self

During the investigation of this study, the researcher critically examined the constructs of intelligence and its multiple dimensions associated with human behaviour along with its relation of international students in general. The abundant knowledge provided by the past researchers and the analysis drawn via interviews and surveys were motivational to continue with the implementation of the research methodology. The importance and relevance of strategically following the research union was well appreciated by the end of this study, as this approach added value and simultaneously justified the time spent by the participants during the interview as these experiences were fruitful. As the transcripts were well documented it was easier to prepare themes, discuss the findings and draw conclusions as constructed in figure 6. The pointers highlighted in the “If High” and “If Low” sections are simply a basic indicator of the findings analysed during the interviews. These being generalised in nature cannot determine the exact meaning unless and until the experiences shared are carefully read and understood.

As a result, the pointers in figure 6 can be summarised as the starting point for international students planning to visit Ireland. It evidently suggests that being intelligent in isolation is simply not the need of the hour, but that social integration is extremely important when implementing EI, CI, and SI in real-life scenarios.

8. Future recommendations

Replicating the nature of this study particularly targeting international students (not limited to master's degree but also doing their bachelors) from other counties in Ireland is ideally essential. This is necessary to either build a new framework for prospective researcher's intending to investigate further, or plan to continue their work on the studies done by previous researchers. Additional pointers that I would wish the future researchers address and are as mentioned below. These maybe be possible research main questions to examine the social challenges that were a critical part of this research.

Mentoring of the students should be country specific – it has observed that communication and hesitant in asking for help was one of the main aspects of low level in the intelligence level. It could be ignorance by an individual or lack of awareness to identify help from.

Accommodation issues – Most participants in this study were residing in Dublin and faced student accommodation issues. It is a known fact that there are very less options of apartments available for students and it becomes extremely troublesome to find an accommodation pre-arrival. Ireland being a growing part of the European economy should consider addressing these issues quickly as there has been an enormous number of international students opting for Ireland as their most favourable destination for education on bachelor's or master's degrees.

Spiritual intelligence – This is one aspect where the researcher identified limited study in, especially when it related to the main three dimensions that were discussed in this study. Incidentally, there was one participant that scouted for spiritual help and it worked wonders in changing his attitude in this academic journey. Hence, the importance of spiritual help should be more emphasised upon so that it can be a useful resource in the overall well-being of an international student.

Award recognition programs – Due to the ongoing restrictions of Covid-19, most colleges across the globe and specifically in Ireland eliminated the cultural events organised by colleges that were a great opportunity for students to come together and experience different cultures under one roof. This was an exception due to covid restrictions, but it did hamper the life of many that were looking forward to meeting people and increase their interactions levels, get to know others as it eventually increases their social experiences and the overall bonding. Also, from an academic excellence perspective, college's should try and arrange for more awards recognitions programs like rewarding the best student in a particular module or performed the best in Semester, these act as motivational factors among students (international or domestic) to strive for excellence.

More practical exposure to the working environment – Increasing the level of social integration and keeping it at the centre to every practical suggestion, it is also crucial to students at master’s level to gain more practical exposure like giving a presentation in public, interacting with mentors of related business arenas.

These pointers in the form of recommendations are important to be expressed by the researcher so that the intent of future investigations is wisely captured for the betterment of international students in Ireland.

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