

MULTICULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Rolan A. Caramba, Felinita III R. Doronio, PhD

*Teacher I, Department of Education, Philippines
Faculty of Grad School, Assumption College of Nabunturan, Philippines*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine how the multicultural sensitivity of teachers, as perceived by students, influences their culturally responsive teaching practices. A correlational method of research was conducted using validated, adapted, and modified questionnaires for both variables. The extent of multicultural sensitivity was measured in terms of five indicators: ethnocentrism, intercultural effort, intercultural stress, exhibiting multiculturalism, and monocultural orientation, while culturally responsive teaching practices were assessed using six indicators: validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. Descriptive statistics revealed that teachers' multicultural sensitivity and culturally responsive teaching practices were generally rated as "High". The null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance to assess the correlation of variables. Results show a significantly low positive correlation between the variables, with Pearson's $r = 0.323$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.005$. Further analyses using an independent t-test and ANOVA indicated no significant differences in multicultural sensitivity when grouped according to sex ($p = 0.599$) and grade level ($p = 0.183$). Moreover, regression analysis identified intercultural stress ($p = 0.019$) and exhibiting multiculturalism ($p = 0.000$) as significant predictors of culturally responsive teaching practices. In conclusion, teachers' multicultural sensitivity, particularly their ability to manage intercultural stress and exhibit multiculturalism, positively influences their responsiveness to diverse student needs. It is recommended that the Department of Education provide sustained training programs on multicultural competencies to strengthen inclusive and culturally grounded teaching practices.

Keywords: *Multicultural sensitivity, culturally responsive teaching practices, correlational study.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices is a research-based instructional methods that involves the use of instructional methods that recognize, respect, and integrate the diverse cultural background of students into the learning process to enhance student engagement that ultimately leads to academic achievement. This pedagogical method includes adapting the curriculum content, employing culturally inclusive teaching strategies, and developing a classroom environment that value cultural diversity (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024).[1]

Implementation of CRT and fostering of multicultural sensitivity in the global scenario face several challenges. The diverse profile of students in many parts of the world due to voluntary or forced migration pose a significant challenge to teachers, who usually report a lack of professional confidence in responding to diversity, which is a consequence of their lack of cultural diversity education (Abacioglu et al., 2022).[2] Moreover, in the USA, a melting pot of race, religion, and culture, the standardize curricula hampers the incorporation of diverse cultural perspective that leads to disconnection between the lived experiences of students and what is taught in schools (Caster, 2023).[3] In the Philippines, challenges in the CRT implementation and multicultural sensitivity adaptation are rooted from historical, linguistic, and sociopolitical factors. The K to 12 program attempts to address language barriers by using Mother Tongue Based (MTB) learning materials and instruction, but teachers often lack local knowledge and cultural understanding (Ras, 2024).[4]

In Agusan del Sur, a province in Caraga Region with a significant indigenous population has a more pronounced challenges in CRT and multicultural sensitivity. As Indigenous People (IP) learners experience the implementation of multicultural education, incidents of discrimination and inequality persist, which calls for efforts from stakeholders, especially the teachers to develop teaching pedagogies that address differences among learners, both IP and non-IP (Balaba, 2023).[5] This problem also persists in the Talaandig tribe from Talacogon, Agusan del Sur. While there is an effort from the Department of Education (DepEd) in their program on Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd), there is a persisting problem on teacher training and resource availability that leads to inconsistencies in implementation (Buenaflor et al., 2023).[6]

In Talacogon, Agusan del Sur, schools have adopted multicultural education in line with RA 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. However, there is still little research on how this affects Indigenous Peoples (IP) students in the area. According to Bastida et al. (2022), teachers—especially those handling IP education—struggle with language and literature instruction under the Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum (LAMC).[7] This points to the need to assess the extent of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices in Talacogon. Understanding teachers' roles in implementing multicultural education is essential to strengthening inclusive education and meeting the unique needs of IP learners in the community

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive correlational quantitative design, as it effectively examined the relationship between teachers' multicultural sensitivity and their culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices from the students' perspective, without manipulating any variables. As noted by Rashid et al. (2021), quantitative methods facilitated the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data, providing reliable and objective results. Additionally, Ghanad (2023) highlighted that a correlational design was particularly suitable when researchers aimed to explore natural connections between two or more variables. Descriptive research, on the other hand, captured accurate details about behaviors and characteristics within a population, making it well-suited for studies focused on attitudes and teaching practices (Karunarathna et al., 2024). This approach allowed the study to quantify the extent to which multicultural sensitivity influenced CRT practices, producing valuable data that could inform education policies and teacher training programs. Given that this research centered on examining the interplay between these two critical educational factors, utilizing a descriptive correlational quantitative design was both logical and practical.

2.2. Research Respondents

The participants in this study were elementary students from selected public schools in the West District of Talacogon, Agusan del Sur. Specifically, the schools involved were Sindungan Elementary School, Talaandig IP School, and Tumalog Elementary School. These schools served a diverse student population, including learners from the Indigenous Peoples (IP) groups of the Talaandig tribe.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

Name of School	No. of Respondents
Sindungan Elementary School	33
Talaandig IP School	10
Tumalog Elementary School	30

As primary stakeholders in the learning process, the pupils' insights were vital in evaluating the implementation and impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) strategies in the classroom. Their perspectives contributed to a deeper understanding of how inclusive and culturally sensitive educational practices influenced student engagement, identity affirmation, and academic experience. To ensure comprehensive representation, the study employed a universal sampling technique, wherein all eligible pupils from the identified schools were included as respondents. Specifically, the inclusion criteria consisted of all pupils enrolled in Grade 4, Grade 5, and Grade 6 levels, as these learners were expected to have sufficient exposure to the multicultural and Indigenous educational content delivered through the curriculum.

The exclusion criteria included pupils who were below Grade 4, Grade 5 or above

Grade 6, as well as those who were unable to participate due to prolonged absences or lack of parental/guardian consent. This sampling approach supported the aim of capturing a broad and accurate reflection of student experiences within multicultural and Indigenous educational contexts.

2.3. Research Instrument

The study utilized adapted research questionnaires published in reputable international journals that underwent rigorous validity and reliability tests. The questionnaires assessed the level of multicultural sensitivity and the level of CRT practices.

To evaluate the level of multicultural sensitivity, the questionnaire adapted from the work of Ruales et al. (2020) was employed. This study focused on the development and validation of the multicultural sensitivity scale for pre-service teachers, which included 34 items with five indicators divided into two domains (personal dimension and professional dimension).

The respondents of this study answered the adapted questionnaire using a FourPoint Likert scale. They indicated their responses as follows: 4 for strongly agree, 3 for agree, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree. To accurately describe the level of multicultural sensitivity among teachers, a specific interpretation was applied.

Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation	
4	3.50 – 4.00	Very High	always observed	Multicultural sensitivity among teachers is
3	2.50 – 3.49	High	often observed	Multicultural sensitivity among teachers is
2	1.50 – 2.49	Low	rarely observed	Multicultural sensitivity among teachers is
1	1.00 – 1.49	Very Low	never observed	Multicultural sensitivity among teachers is

To test the level of CRT practices, the questionnaire was adapted from the work of Mangila and Paculaba (2020). Their study measured the level of CRT practices of elementary teachers in Zamboanga del Sur. The questionnaire consisted of 29 items for the six indicators.

The respondents of this study answered this adapted questionnaire using a FourPoint Likert scale. They answered 4 if they strongly agreed, 3 if they agreed, 2 if they disagreed, or 1 if they strongly disagreed. To properly describe the level of CRT practices among teachers, the following interpretation was used.

Scale Range	Description	Interpretation
4 3.50 – 4.00	Very High	CRT practices among teachers are always manifested.
3 2.50 – 3.49	High	CRT practices among teachers are often manifested.
2 1.50 – 2.49	Low	CRT practices among teachers are rarely manifested.
1 1.00 – 1.49	Very Low	CRT practices among teachers are never always manifested.

2.4. Procedure

Prior to full implementation, the adapted and translated instruments underwent pilot testing with a small group of Grade 5 and Grade 6 pupils from a school not included in the main study. The pilot test aimed to identify issues in wording, comprehension, and cultural relevance of the Visayan version of the questionnaires. Respondents' feedback was collected to guide refinements in the translation and phrasing of items. This phase also generated preliminary data to calculate the reliability of the translated tools using Cronbach's alpha. Adjustments were made as necessary to ensure that the final instruments used in the study were valid, reliable, and age-appropriate, effectively capturing pupils' experiences of multicultural sensitivity and CRT practices in their own language and context.

Before proceeding with data collection, a formal letter of permission was secured from the Division Schools Superintendent of Agusan del Sur, requesting approval to conduct the study and access relevant data regarding the number of elementary schools that qualified for inclusion in the research. Once permission was granted, the quantitative data was collected using an adapted questionnaire for the study of Ruales et al. (2020), and Mangila and Paculaba (2020), which was distributed to respondents in printed questionnaire to facilitate efficient and accessible data gathering.

After collecting the responses, the data was tabulated and analyzed using statistical methods, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation to describe the dataset, as well as Pearson's r and linear regression analysis to examine relationships between variables. These analytical techniques provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices and multicultural sensitivity among teachers as observed by students in Talacogon.

2.5. Data Analysis

Mean. This was used to determine the level of multicultural sensitivity and the culturally responsive teaching.

Standard Deviation. This was used to measure the extent of dispersion of a set of responses from the mean value.

Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson R). This was used to determine the relationships between multicultural sensitivity and culturally responsive practices.

Independent t-test. This was used to identify the significant difference in multicultural sensitivity when grouped according to gender and years of service.

3. RESULTS

Table 2. Distribution of the Respondents according to Sex

Sex	Number of Respondents	Percent Frequency
Male	27	37%
Female	46	63%
Total	73	100%

Table 3. Distribution of the Respondents according to Grade Level

Grade Level	Number of Respondents	Percent Frequency
Grade 4	22	30%
Grade 5	25	34%
Grade 6	26	36%
Total	73	100%

Table 4. Level of Ethnocentrism

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I've noticed that my teacher thinks ethnic minority groups get offended easily.	3.52	Very High
2. I feel like my teacher believes that ethnic minorities should adjust to the ways of the majority.	3.11	High
3. It seems like my teacher thinks society gives too much attention to ethnic minority groups.	2.97	High
4. I've observed that my teacher is more trusting toward people from their own ethnic background than those from other groups.	2.88	High
5. I feel like my teacher sees ethnic minority students as overreacting in certain situations.	2.96	High
Overall Mean	3.09	High

Table 5. Level of Intercultural Effort

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have observed that my teacher tries to learn how to communicate properly with students from different ethnic groups.	3.36	High

2. I can see that my teacher makes an effort to interact with students from other ethnic backgrounds.	3.40	High
3. It seems like my teacher puts effort into learning about the culture of other ethnic groups.	3.29	High
4. I feel like my teacher believes that understanding other cultures helps them connect better with students.	3.19	High
Overall Mean	3.31	High

Table 6. Level of Intercultural Stress

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have noticed that my teacher seems uncomfortable being around people from other ethnic groups.	2.63	High
2. It seems like my teacher doesn't see much value in spending time with students from ethnic minority groups.	2.52	High
3. I have observed that my teacher struggles to work well with students who have a different cultural background.	2.89	High
4. I feel like my teacher gets stressed when dealing with students from other cultures.	2.53	High
5. It seems hard for my teacher to appreciate the cultural diversity in our school/community.	2.77	High
Overall Mean	2.67	High

Table 7. Level Exhibiting Multiculturalism

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have observed that my teacher is open to teaching students from different cultural backgrounds.	3.37	High
2. It seems like my teacher gives students a chance to share their own cultural differences in class.	3.42	High
3. I have noticed that my teacher tries to help us understand the customs and traditions of other cultures.	3.40	High
4. I think my teacher looks for ways to lessen prejudice or bias among students.	2.90	High
5. I have observed that my teacher makes an effort to recognize and respect our cultural practices.	3.32	High
6. It looks like my teacher chooses learning materials that show different cultures and backgrounds.	3.05	High
7. I have seen that my teacher tries to mix students from different cultures when forming groups in class.	3.22	High
8. I think my teacher adjusts their teaching style to fit the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds.	2.96	High
Overall Mean	3.21	High

Table 8. Level of Monocultural Orientation

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have noticed that my teacher thinks we should avoid using our dialects in the classroom.	2.64	High

2. It seems like my teacher believes that speaking in our home languages (like Cebuano, Maranao, Hiligaynon, Surigaonon, etc.) should be discouraged in school.	3.32	High
3. I have observed that my teacher prefers teaching students who share the same culture as theirs.	3.10	High
4. I think my teacher expects that teaching about cultural diversity might cause conflicts in the classroom.	3.01	High
5. I have noticed that my teacher believes that ethnic minority students should be separated in school to avoid conflicts.	2.88	High
6. I have observed that my teacher thinks it would be hard to work with the parents of students from ethnic minority groups.	3.02	High
Overall Mean	3.00	High

Table 9. Level of Validating

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have noticed that my teacher includes literature from different cultural groups to help reduce prejudice against them.	3.18	High
2. I have observed that my teacher provides cultural context to make our learning more relevant to different cultures.	3.05	High
3. I have seen that my teacher works to create a classroom environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all cultures.	3.33	High
Overall Mean	3.19	High

Table 10. Comprehensive

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have noticed that my teacher recognizes and encourages different study habits among students.	3.30	High
2. I have observed that my teacher encourages us to work together as a class, like an extended family, by supporting and helping each other.	3.34	High
3. I have seen that my teacher encourages positive relationships between us as students and with them as our teacher.	3.25	High
4. I have noticed that my teacher refers to our different cultures when teaching us the subject matter.	3.01	High
5. I have observed that my teacher respects the cultures and experiences of different groups of people.	3.33	High
6. I have seen that my teacher includes the cultural heritages of various minority groups in the lessons we're learning.	3.26	High
7. I have noticed that my teacher encourages us to respect and honor human dignity.	3.27	High
8. I have observed that my teacher encourages us to understand how everyone is connected to one another.	3.42	High
Overall Mean	3.27	High

Table 11. Level of Multidimensional

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have noticed that my teacher uses different teaching methods to match how we all learn in different ways.	3.41	High

2. I have observed that my teacher makes an effort to help us feel like we belong in the classroom.	3.23	High
3. I have seen that my teacher provides us with a variety of learning content that covers different perspectives and topics.	3.00	High
4. I have noticed that my teacher allows us to take an active role in our own learning and performance in class.	3.15	High
Overall Mean	3.20	High

Table 12. Level of Empowering

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have noticed that my teacher encourages us to build our own self-confidence and sense of identity.	3.47	High
2. I have observed that my teacher shows appreciation for our strengths and what we've accomplished.	3.05	High
3. I have seen that my teacher supports our efforts to do well academically.	3.10	High
4. I have noticed that my teacher celebrates both individual and group accomplishments in class.	3.11	High
Overall Mean	3.18	High

Table 13. Transformative

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have noticed that my teacher provides helpful resources and personal support to students in the classroom.	3.37	High
2. I have observed that my teacher sets high yet reasonable expectations for us as students.	2.86	High
3. I have seen that my teacher recognizes the importance of informal social interactions between students.	3.37	High
4. I have noticed that my teacher finds ways to connect what we learn at home with what we learn in school.	3.22	High
5. I've observed that my teacher believes that students from ethnic minorities should be separated to avoid conflict in the classroom.	3.31	High
6. I have noticed that my teacher thinks it would be hard to work with the parents of students from ethnic minority groups.	3.01	High
Overall Mean	3.19	High

Table 14. Emancipatory

Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. I have noticed that my teacher helps us understand that no single version of "truth" is final or complete.	3.45	High
2. I have observed that my teacher works together with other subject teachers to teach a single cultural concept.	3.33	High
3. I have seen that my teacher encourages us to understand the connections among local communities.	3.12	High
4. I have noticed that my teacher encourages us to understand how local, national, minority, and global identities are connected.	3.38	High

5. I have observed that my teacher empowers students from marginalized groups.	3.22	High
6. I have noticed that my teacher provides us with real and accurate information about different minority groups.	3.21	High
Overall Mean	3.28	High

Table 15. Correlation between Multicultural Sensitivity and Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

Variables	p-value	Correlation Coefficient	Remarks
Multicultural Sensitivity Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices	0.005	0.323	Significant

Table 16. Independent t-Test for Multicultural Sensitivity from the Perspective of Students when Grouped according to Sex

Gender	p-value	Remarks
Male	0.599	Not Significant
Female		

Table 17. Analysis of Variance of Multicultural Sensitivity from the Perspective of Students when Grouped according to Grade Level

Grade Level	p-value	Remarks
Grade 4 Grade 5 Grade 6	0.183	Not Significant

Table 18. Regression Analysis of Multicultural Sensitivity

Multicultural Sensitivity	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	pvalue	Remarks
Ethnocentrism	0.489	0.311	1.571	0.121	Not Significant
Intercultural Effort	-0.046	0.081	-0.571	0.570	Not Significant
Intercultural Stress	0.157	0.065	2.404	0.019	Significant
Exhibiting Multiculturalism	0.709	0.067	10.583	0.000	Significant
Monocultural Orientation	0.070	0.036	2.947	0.056	Not Significant

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the student respondents, composed of both male and female learners across Grades 4, 5, and 6, had a balanced representation that allowed for varied and meaningful insights regarding their teachers' multicultural sensitivity and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices. The demographic profile showed that the students' perceptions did not significantly differ when grouped by sex or grade level, suggesting a generally uniform experience of multicultural sensitivity across different student subgroups.

In terms of the level of multicultural sensitivity, the teachers were perceived to demonstrate a high level across all five dimensions: ethnocentrism, intercultural effort, intercultural stress, exhibiting multiculturalism, and monocultural orientation. Among these, exhibiting multiculturalism and managing intercultural stress emerged as the most significant indicators, as confirmed by the regression analysis. This finding suggests that students recognize and value

their teachers' efforts to acknowledge cultural diversity and respond appropriately to culturally diverse interactions in the classroom.

Similarly, the level of culturally responsive teaching practices among teachers was also perceived as high in all six domains: validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, 77 empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. These practices reflect a teaching environment that promotes inclusion, critical thinking, and student empowerment. The emancipatory dimension, in particular, was rated highly, indicating that students observed their teachers encouraging awareness of diverse identities and social justice issues.

The test for the significance of the relationship between multicultural sensitivity and CRT practices revealed a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation. This implies that as teachers demonstrate higher levels of multicultural sensitivity, they are also more likely to engage in culturally responsive teaching practices. These findings affirm that multicultural awareness and sensitivity are essential components of effective, inclusive teaching strategies.

Finally, the regression analysis identified two specific indicators of multicultural sensitivity, intercultural stress, and exhibiting multiculturalism, as significant predictors of culturally responsive teaching. This highlights the need for professional development programs that help teachers manage cultural stress effectively and integrate multicultural perspectives into their pedagogy. Overall, the study underscores the vital role of multicultural sensitivity in shaping inclusive, equitable, and responsive educational practices in elementary classrooms.

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BIOGRAPHY

ROLAN A. CARAMBA



CARAMBA, ROLAN ALFECHÉ

ROLAN A. CARAMBA is a passionate advocate for culturally responsive education, currently undertaking research on multicultural sensitivity and its impact on teaching practices in elementary schools. As an elementary teacher and MAED-ELED student at Assumption College of Nabunturan, Rolan's commitment to this area is rooted in a deep-seated belief in educational equity and the importance of recognizing and valuing diverse cultural backgrounds. With a background in elementary education, Rolan's research seeks to highlight the importance of cultural awareness in education and provide practical guidance for teachers striving to create equitable and engaging learning environments.