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## **EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE ON EMPATHY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract:**

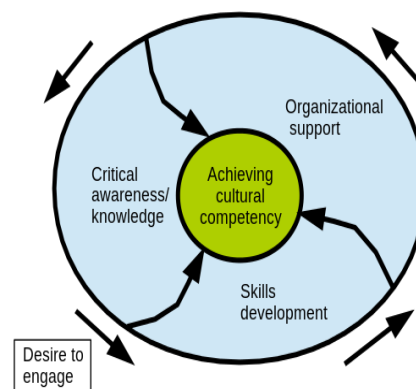
This paper aims to investigate the effects of multicultural literature on young learners, empathy and cultural sensitivity in elementary school. The use of multicultural literature as a tool in the classroom provides for a perspective, forgetting the differences and accepting a blended culture. Students learn how to accept and value people's differences when choosing books of interest for reading since they are not focused on their own culture, and accordingly, such an approach reduces ethnocentricity. Students learn about cultural differences and understand when it comes to sharing their own opinions and replying others. The use of critical literacy dealing with multicultural literature creates knowledge, skills, as well as the values needed by the learners in order to enhance the community. An effort to incorporate multicultural literature in student teachers' classrooms is recommended to assist them in developing a positive attitude towards diversity as a way of preparing them to become culturally sensitive teachers to facilitate learning among culturally diverse students. Maturing preservice teachers' understanding, empathy, compassion, and mutual respect are created through the use of diverse books in their training. It is clear need to promote multicultural literature in enhancing the social and emotional development of the students as well as the educators at the elementary level. It includes diverse books and critical discussions in the curriculum. It is essential in preparing the students for a more diverse society in the future. In light of these findings, it can be concluded that reading multicultural literature is used to improve students' cultural sensitivity and cultural knowledge. Multicultural literature plays a major role in enhancing students' empathy and cultural awareness in the lower elementary classes.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Literature, Empathy, Culture Competence, Elementary Education, Inclusive Education, Social and emotional Learning, Diverse Narratives

## Introduction:

Multicultural literature depicts cultures different from the student's own culture. The students are able to relate to themselves and the world they live in; hence, they have a better perception when it comes to issues of diversity (Sims Bishop, 1990). Due to the presentation of multiculturalism to students and the bringing out of diversity exposure, cultural sensitivity, and understanding, valued human qualities in the current society, multicultural literature aids in the enhancement of learners' outcomes (Banks, 2007). Thus, having multicultural literature involved in the teaching and learning process in elementary education is important, as the aspect adds to the social and emotional parts of developing learners. According to the findings of scholars, children who read multicultural literature will be more accepting of other people and in possession of a more accurate perspective of the world since they are exposed to characters different from themselves or situations they have never been in (Norton, 2013). Besides developing their cognition and affect, it also prepares them for a diverse society that is the multicultural society of the world today. Furthermore, multicultural literature helps to offer the viewers a counter story. It assists in overcoming stereotyping and prejudices since the learner gets to be exposed to true cultural benchmarks (Cai, 2002). Therefore, students are able to get a better picture of cultural actualities to be able to competently handle issues pertaining to culture (Ghosh, 2014). Indonesia in general is one of the multicultural countries that has always appreciated different diversities in practically every sphere of life and will continue to do so in the foreseen future. Nonetheless, people exist in a progressively globalized world, as the advancement of technology has shortened the distance of networks. Since multicultural literature has invaded the English curriculum, it calls for the development of the teachers' culture and their sensitive abilities.

*Figure No:01 Contextual Culture competence model*



## **Multicultural Literature**

It is not simply to get students to understand and enjoy a story and consider it art, but it must also be considered a medium for presenting a philosophy (as cited in Goo, 2018). Multicultural literature is defined as that genre that is able to handle a dualistic approach with reference to identities and the reinforcement of the cultural background, as well as one that can cover or focalize an ethnic, urban, or diversified multicultural perspective (Davis, 2016). The problems that give all-white literature its dominance, however, have given way to new challenges as a result of multicultural literature; the marginalized ethnic group's perspective, a new genre of literature, describes and narrates their world through the voices and images of their people. It is occasionally referred to as the literature of underrepresented cultures (Bista, 2012). Racism is one of the pressing social issues of today that arises from the exclusion of multiculturalism from school activities. Children can be encouraged to feel proud of themselves and their families by reading literature that affirms their identities as communities of young people and as members of diverse families (Adam et al., 2019). Children and teenagers, on the other hand, are exposed to multicultural literature that presents other cultural viewpoints in response to preexisting behavioral and belief patterns. Therefore, students who study multicultural literature will gradually come to comprehend that all ethnic groups have historical roots and that each has a justifiable heritage that contributes to the wealth of culture, according to actual statistics offered by Gripton (1993).

## **Teachers Lack Multicultural Competence**

Teachers are not trained on cultural sensitivity, they interpret values, beliefs, and events “at a conventional level and with focus on what they are aware of themselves” (Tonbuloglu, 2016, p. 4). This results in them having ‘a wrong perception of the ethnic, social, racial, or linguistic differences of their students’ and ‘instinctively or inadvertently using the appropriate approach in their classroom’ (Tonbuloglu, 2016, p. 4). It means that teachers who lack cultural proficiency are likely to apply some strategies in teaching that are not good for all students, especially the relevant disadvantaged students, hence creating the already-known achievement gap within society for culturally different students. This is a serious 10 problems because, as stated by Tonbuloglu (2016), “Native teachers are not equipped with the training to become performative multicultural educators before or even during their professional careers,” and he further asserts that “the effectiveness of formal education depends on the disposition and preparedness of the teacher himself.”

## **Incorporating Family and Affirming Culture into the Classroom**

Teachers expressed various negative perceptions about families and parents of color, as well as their involvement, or lack thereof, in their children's academic aspirations. According to Jahnelle A. Cunningham, what teachers are experiencing is not a lack of involvement, as they claim, but rather teachers failing to observe or completely turning a blind eye to the involvement of parents



of color simply because it is 'not related to school affairs' (Cunningham, 2021, p. 28). Parent activists of color are primarily concerned with their children's academic and future careers, as well as their safety, in addition to the typical concerns that any parent would have for their 19-year-old child. This is because they "had to raise their children on prejudice and bigotry. (Cunningham, 2021, page 37). Cunningham's research on how African American children participate in mathematics education provides insights on how students of color should be supported in all classrooms, regardless of subject. Cunningham chose to conduct this research because, as stated in her work, "whereas students' mathematical identities are not built-in vacuum, but are situated within other significant aspects of identity, including race, gender, and social class," and further noted that "messages received by students regarding mathematics and other aspects, including race, determine how the students perceive their mathematic capabilities in relation to others

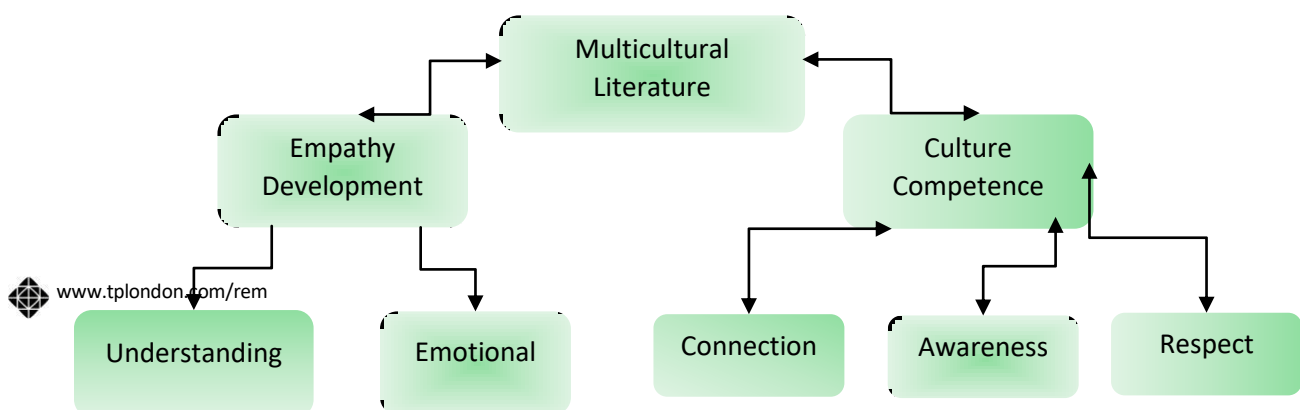
### **Teacher-Student Cultural Mismatch**

Teacher-student cultural mismatch is another concept that suggests the fact that sometimes the teachers as well as students originate from different cultural backgrounds, and disparate cultural practices in the classroom may present some problems. For example, Gay (2000) pointed out the possibility of teaching culturally assimilated prejudice when teachers' expectations and behavior with the students seem to be affected by the lenses through which they have learned to view the world and interact with students: it becomes possible for the teacher to assess any behavior that she or he has not learned or recognized as acceptable as defiance. Ladson-Billings (1995) opined that language could be a barrier to communication and full engagement in class, while Banks (1993) stated that cultural irrelevance in the curriculum will make the learners feel that they do not belong to the class, hence demotivating them. Furthermore, Skiba et al. (2002) established their studies that disciplinary reaches a cultural status involving the majority's way of disciplining students where the minority are always on the receiving end, therefore racially discriminated. All these can jointly affect the learners' academic performance and their perceived status in the learning institution.

### **Research Questions:**

- How does the inclusion of multicultural literature in elementary classrooms influence students' attitudes toward diversity and their ability to engage with peers from different cultural backgrounds?

*Figure No: 02 Theoretical Framework*



### **Culturally Responsive Instruction**

Culturally relevant teaching and learning is an instructional model that seeks to incorporate the cultural realities of students in a classroom with the intent of helping the learner. This learning-sensitization strategy entails adopting and applying culture sensitivity and students' experiences and views in order to enhance teaching as well as students' learning processes. In the researcher's own understanding, Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as a way of acknowledging how students bring different cultural realities into the classroom and proceed to incorporate these realities in what is taught and how it is taught. Ladson-Billings (1995) stressed that in culturally relevant pedagogy, learners' cultural backgrounds are valued and, at the same time, the learner is expected to reason critically and act justly. Further, Banks (2001) pointed out that multicultural curriculum enhances students' ability to develop cultural democracy, which ensures that children are comfortable with the diversity of society. These strategies are very important for narrowing down the achievement gap and providing equal opportunity to all students and cultural recognition for their roots.

### **Intercultural Competence**

It involves the latter and focuses on the participant's ability to effectively and correctly navigate situations involving people from other cultures. It refers to a set of knowledge, feelings, and activities concerning cultural aspects that affect people's daily interactions, work, and personal lives. Intercultural competence includes the passion that involves such virtues as respect and openness, the cognition that includes a comprehension of cultural differences and similarities, and the sensibility that entails abilities for interpreting multiple cultural contexts. Fantini (2000) stressed that, according to the contemporary definitions, intercultural communication competence as a concept enshrines a process of learning that is unending; this process will require one to be sensitive to the self as well as the other. Bennett (1993) called this developmental model of intercultural sensitivity with the same name, which can be described as the following stages individuals move through in terms of their level of cross-cultural competency: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. This competence is more important than before, especially in contemporary society, which has become a global village in terms of interpersonal as well as business relations.

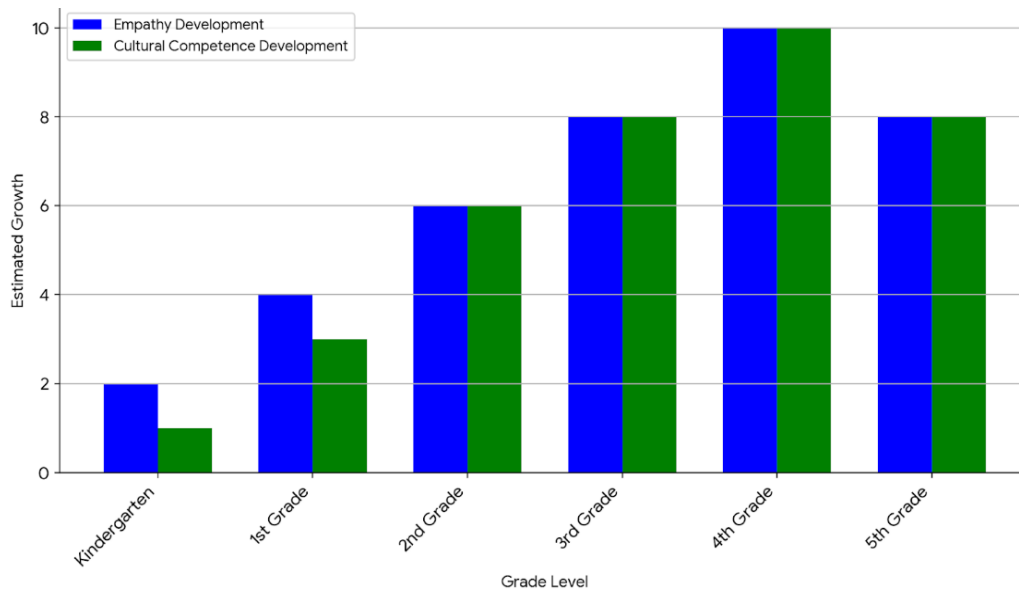
### **Problem Statement**

There are possibilities that multicultural literature can solve these problems as it introduces various pieces of literature where students can see different cultural representations. Previous studies point to the positive effects of multicultural literature in the improvement of empathy and cultural sensitivity. This area of research still lacks empirical investigation of the effects of multicultural literature in elementary education in particular. The lack of diversity in literature, the absence of diverse characters might prevent students from obtaining perspective on the cross-cultural experience that further increases prejudice. Such is the scope of the identified gap in the



current literature base, a significant worldwide research need that warrants a methodical investigation of how and to what extent the selected multicultural books and other materials affect the students' social and emotional growth, especially as it concerns their empathic sensitivity to cultural differences. The issue that this study seeks to solve is the extent to which multicultural literature positively impacts the empathy and cultural understanding of elementary school learners. By so doing, this study wants to contribute useful findings that can help in the enhancement of educational practice and curriculum to ensure that all scholars will be given the privileges in educational environments and which can equally help in evoking empathy amongst students.

*Figure No: 03 Impact of Multicultural Literature on Empathy and culture competence in Elementary Education*



The above chart depicting the effects of multicultural literature on the teaching of elementary education and the students' cultural sensitivity and empathy, would show the results trending healthier as the academic year advances or students' progress a grade higher. On the x-axis, it is arrayed in terms of grade, from kindergarten to 5th, whereas the y-axis depicts the expected improvement in these qualities. Vertical lines indicate 'empathy' that has comparatively higher increase values than the 'cultural competence' indicated by the horizontal lines. This implies that multicultural literature may elicit more empathy, as the children would easily relate to the books. Still, the data in the graph is not real, in the sense that it is a tested and proven fact; it is simply informational-data converted to a figure to give a clear picture of the real information intended

by the graph. The former can confirm or negate the fact that there are positive associations between the two qualities, while the latter shows that they feel uneven in that they may progress at different rates or react differently to stimuli within multicultural literature. However, the graph cannot typecast the variations of one's experience, quality of literature, or extent of pedagogy. Hence, more qualitative and quantitative analysis is required to establish a correlation between the consumption of multicultural literature and these developmental benefits, which are fundamental in personal development. Some factors relate to the selection of high-quality literature that contains only appropriate cultural content, the choice of instructional methods, students' characteristics, and the reliability of the assessment instruments.

### **Previous Study**

Multicultural literature also helps students to become more culturally sensitive and accepting of cultural differences, especially among the elementary school students. In light of these outcomes of the research, it will be pertinent to conclude that exposure to various literary works improves the children's perception of other cultures. Similarly, Brown and Fogg (2017), as cited, have argued that reading multicultural literature leads to the expulsion of prejudices and therefore cultural sensitivity. Lee and Sanchez (2016) said that cultural competence should be adopted as part of teaching practices, and ELL students' exposure to such literature fosters cultural awareness among the learners. Carter & Anderson (2015) stated that the use of diverse literature will enhance the students' positive attitudes and behaviors affirming diversity. Thompson and Lee (2014) also backed this by illustrating that multicultural education, literature in particular, increases understanding of others and also decreases prejudice. Williams and Martinez (2018) supported these findings by establishing that multicultural literature programs help in creating positive changes in the perception and treatment of nonmainstream groups in elementary schools. Altogether, these works reveal the importance, advocated by multicultural literature, for changing the perception towards the other culture and improving the climate in educational settings.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Defining Culture**

Culture may be explained as an intricate mix of the patterns of beliefs, endowment, customs, and law that people believe and observe as being in the interest of society. It defines the aggregated software of the brain that sets apart one group or category of people from the other, as described by Hofstede (1980). Culture defines people's attitudes, controls their contacts, and sets the tone for the way they interpret events and phenomena. This is not static but is rather developmental and will therefore change with the prevailing conditions and the social setting. According to Tylor (1871), culture is the totality of the man-made objects and practices that are concerned





with meaning, belief, art, and custom, along with other acquired characteristics and traits by the individuals as they belong to society. Culture is within the framework of anthropology defined as one of the ways that people interact with the surrounding environment and exchange signals. Culture is a critical concept of sociology that helps raise awareness of the nature of various human societies and how people collectively or individually build their worlds.

### **Pedagogy of Culturally Responsive Instruction**

Culturally relevant teaching is the process of incorporating consciousness of the student's cultural heritage and diversities to enhance the effective teaching process. This approach is even more proactive than the previous one because it, by definition, integrates students' cultural frameworks into curriculum and instruction to enhance relevance and student interest. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant teaching is an educational framework that affects the centrality of students' cultural experiences as a medium for teaching knowledge, skills, and belief systems. This perspective includes perhaps the most basic and foundational part of this pedagogy: the affirmation of students' cultural realities. According to Gay (2000), culturally relevant teaching therefore entails the teachers' ability to understand their own cultural biases, as well as the cultural orientations of the learners they teach. This knowledge is then used to modify the dynamics of teaching and learning, for instance, using examples that are sensitive to the cultural background of the children, the use of language that they understand best, and the relationship of what is taught in class to the child's real life. Moreover, the components of culturally responsive instruction include critical thinking and social justice. It empowers students to become critical of tradition, power, and the activeness of discrimination in public spaces and the academic arena. This aspect is important in as far as training the students in critical consciousness, which to Freire (1970) entails the ability to look and act on the structures of society, politics, and economy, doing away with unjust components of reality.

### **Designing Culturally Relevant Curriculum**

Cultural relevancy means the learners are in a position to identify themselves with the contents they are learning about. This approach entails the use of texts, examples, and even a universal perspective from cultural and other minority groups, as well as the participation of such groups. Banks (1993) also asserts that multicultural curriculum enhances the students' understanding and appreciation of the global reality and increases the students' feelings of contribution and affirmation. The author like to see the curriculum make connections between the content being taught and the student's culture and existence. Ladson-Billings' (1995) argument, it is clear that culturally relevant pedagogy entails the ability of the teacher to connect what is taught within the classroom, the challenges and realities of the outside world as faced by the students and their community. Engaging the students in such a manner also goes a long way in making the students see the relevance of their learning. That is, culturally relevant curricula enable students to



analyze social relations and power architecture. This paper reflects Freire's (1970) bank of knowledge approach, where the education system empowers students to think critically, view the world as a problem to solve, and work to eliminate oppression. This aspect of the curriculum enables the students to acquire competencies and information required in order to be active and responsible citizens with respect to the diversity of society. Indeed, it is crucial in developing culturally appropriate pedagogy to involve students' families and communities. They improve the understanding of cultural background and values of learners and increase the possibilities for bringing culturally appropriate instruction to diverse learners. In their note titled 'Funds of Knowledge for Making Schools Effective for Latino Students,' published in the year 1992, Moll, B., & Gonzalez, E. stress the need to pay attention to what students bring to school from their home.

### **Demonstrating Caring and Building Learning Communities**

The process of establishing learning communities means establishing subject-related community feelings in the students. These can be attained, like in collaborative learning, in which students are grouped to complete a certain task or class assignment and peers assist one another. In such communities, diversity is valued, and all the diversity information is recognized as an asset to the community's knowledge base. Noddings (1992) pointed out that the ethic of care in education focuses on relationships and community, pointing out that caring promotes responsibility to others among students. If such a culture is promoted within a classroom and a school, then students are able to learn in comfort, contribute to lessons, and do not hesitate to try something new. This, besides, ensures optimal academic performance and personal and social competency for success in the complex global society.

### **Cross-Cultural Communication Communicating With Culturally Diverse Students**

The necessity of culturally sensitive communication Proper communication begins with the acknowledgement of the differences between cultural perspectives. Hall (1976) has pointed out that cultures differ in their ways of communication through the use of spoken and written words and uses of body language, for instance, eye contact, gestures, and space. For example, high context culture might use more indirect communication in information and inferential messages; low context culture might use direct, literal words in communication (Hall, 1976). Thus, the educators should consider their strategies for communication appropriate to the needs of the students they are dealing with. Also, Gudykunst and Kim (2003) stress the significance of the cultural attitude and adaptability in the process of communication. This entails eschewing the use of expressions that could be peculiar to the given cultural realms that the students hail from; rather, the language employed should be as unambiguous as possible (Gudykunst and Kim



2003). It will promote humanity's sociocultural complexion and thereby increase students' involvement, especially in multicultural settings. According to Banks (2001), a multicultural curriculum is one where learner's cultural diversities are depicted while at the same time promoting learning and appreciation of other cultures. This approach assists students in relating what is happening in their own lives with the subject matter under discussion and is integrative in nature (Banks, 2001). For the cross-cultural communication between students to be effective, there should always be a focus on ensuring that the students are comfortable with each other. Noddings (1992) states that caring relationships are essential in education since mere interest in student's ethnicity and actual listening to their voice create trust within the context of education. Such an environment helps students to contribute even more and express opinions that can be different from others (Noddings, 1992). Intercultural competence should be assumed by educators themselves in order to be able to establish proper communication with students from different cultures. Some of the factors of intercultural competence as defined by Deardorff include culture shock, culture attitude, cultural intelligence, culture share, empathy, culture adaptability, and culture conversation. Education issues are focused on these skills for identifying student groups' needs and ensuring better communication and learning processes (Deardorff, 2006).

### **Culturally Responsive Instruction Examples**

Teachers are capable of developing lessons that may involve cultural diversity and minority contents and sources. For instance, when learning the topics of the literature and history from diverse cultures, the learners acquire some affiliation of their experiences that enable them to embrace different views. When it comes to the concern as to which type of texts should be employed in the classroom, Gay (2000) recommends texts that signify different cultures and experiences, telling the students that their reality is valid and relevant rather than an alienating, lonely road. Since students can bring examples and approximates of real situations from different cultures, the teachers can incorporate these examples and approximates into classroom teaching. For instance, when dealing with mathematical lessons, the teacher could use frequencies that are culturally creative or activities that are reciprocally familiar to the students. Based on the literature, Ladson-Billings (1995) advocates for meaningful connections to be made between the content taught in school and the students' culture. Differentiated instruction is the instance where the teacher uses some strategies of teaching based on students' learning preferences and cultural background. This could range from employing different teaching approaches and teaching gimmicks like PowerPoint presentations, practical activities or debates, orals, and group work among students in order to meet their needs. According to Tomlinson (2001), by adapting the classroom practices to assume planned differences in students' readiness, interest, learning pace, and preferences (to mention but a few aspects), the rate of students' achievement can be increased. This is because teachers can use it as a basis for the discussions and activities that they initiate in order to tap into what culturally endorses the students' perception. For example, when

the teacher directs students to tell their Heston cultural practices or narratives, the classroom setting and the students' cultural selves will be enhanced. Moll et al. (1992) state that when developing the research topics, a teacher may permit the students to select them based on the cultural values since such an approach would enhance the learner's responsibilities towards the learning process. In as much as it agrees to the identification and integration of the student's "funds of knowledge" from home and community settings to learning. Most especially when the student is required to make choices in their learning activities and projects, it becomes easier for them to relate their learning with their culture or interests. For instance, when developing the research topics, a teacher may permit the students to select them based on the cultural values since such an approach would enhance the learner's responsibilities towards the learning process. This is consistent with Ladson-Billings (1995), who encouraged practitioners to incorporate a student-centered paradigm based on their cultural background.

### **Multicultural Education to Multicultural Literature**

This educational is also an attempt to try and introduce multiculturalism in the teaching and learning process. It has as its goal the promotion of diversity so that each student can feel addressed in some way throughout the course of the school year. Multicultural education also entails change in curriculums and perspectives that reflect the numerous cultures, learning about various cultures and their achievements, acknowledgment of cultural differences, and equal distribution of resources (Banks, 2001). This approach is helpful in negating biases and stereotyping and to prepare students for living in a multicultural society that the world has turned into. This concerns literature that portrays the experiences of the ethnic, racial, and cultural communities of the world. The multicultural literature helps students develop understanding about the cultural refocusing, values, and supports of different cultures. It enlightens students on cultural relativity via narration and stories of other people and cultures. Short (1996) has suggested that MC literature can be extremely valuable for teaching multicultural education as it provides students with the viewpoints of people belonging to different cultures. Multicultural literature as a construct is part of the larger entity referred to as multicultural education. When properly incorporated into the instructional process, multicultural literature improves the learning process and increases the students' awareness of other cultures. For example, readers can assist the students to understand culturally different information sources through identifying with the protagonists with different social-cultural backgrounds and, thus, generate discourses on identity differences and similarities (Rosenblatt, 1995).



*Table 1: General Criteria for Evaluating Multicultural Children's Literature*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Authenticity</b>	The book accurately represents the culture it portrays.
<b>Cultural Relevance</b>	The cultural context and setting relevant and accurately depicted.
<b>Engagement</b>	The cultural context and setting relevant and accurately depicted.
<b>Literary Quality</b>	The book well-written with high-quality storytelling and illustrations.
<b>Educational Value</b>	The book provides educational content about the culture in an accessible way.
<b>Bias and Stereotypes</b>	The book avoids perpetuating stereotypes or biases about the culture.

*Table 2:  
Criteria*

*for Evaluating Cultural Representation and Accuracy*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Cultural Accuracy</b>	Cultural traditions, practices, and beliefs depicted accurately.
<b>Representation of Characters</b>	Characters portrayed with depth and complexity, avoiding stereotypes.
<b>Engagement</b>	The cultural context and setting relevant and accurately depicted.
<b>Cultural Detail</b>	The book includes specific cultural details such as language, dress, and customs.
<b>Author's Background</b>	The author from the culture being represented or have they conducted thorough research.
<b>Impact on Readers</b>	The book influence readers' perceptions of the culture represented.

## **Developing Preservice Teachers Intercultural Competence**

It is evident from the particulars of the contemporary research pertaining to multicultural literature for enhancing empathy as well as cultural competency in the context of elementary education, the following loopholes are discernible. Earlier scholars' works often aim at studying the role of a specific intervention within a short period of time; therefore, more research has to be conducted to establish the sustainability of these effects. Brown & Fogg, 2017). Furthermore, there is a lack of the indicated large-scale quantitative study that uses the objective indicators to evaluate the changes in empathy and cultural sensitivity (Carter & Anderson, 2015). The majority of the research is conducted in a global place (Thompson & Lee, 2014), meaning that research needs to be conducted in different learning settings. Furthermore, the roles and preparation of the teachers together with implementing and executed processes appeared in the background of the inquiry; the scientifically grounded comparisons of multicultural literature with other learning paradigms that still happened stay scarce (Lee & Sanchez, 2016; Williams & Martinez, 2018). In addition, while previous research focuses on the educators' concerns, attempting to listen to learning students may bring more insights to the field (Brown & Fogg, 2017). Lastly, in reference to the subjects, research aims at the students at the elementary level, while very few investigations focus on the effect of technology integration for other groups of students, particularly the senior learners (Carter & Anderson, 2015). The lack of such trajectories could help to explain how multicultural literature was raising empathy and cultural conscience in diverse learning environments and among children of different ages.

## **Methodology**

The qualitative data is collected for this research work. There is collection of review papers, Research Articles, and different online platforms. The data itself is secondary data to explore the effects of multicultural literature on empathy and cultural competence in elementary education. The study employs a qualitative method for data collection and analysis that employs educational Online survey data. The report data related to measurement of concern is also part for multicultural literature. It is an extensive literature review yields richer understanding by incorporating qualitative findings through thematic analysis of case studies, and focus groups. The qualitative results of the study, the research wants to make a comprehensive picture of the impact of multicultural literature on students' empathetical and cultural growth. Thus, this methodology provides a clear and comprehensive evaluation since it includes qualitative analysis of the results and the context in which the changes took place.

## **Findings**

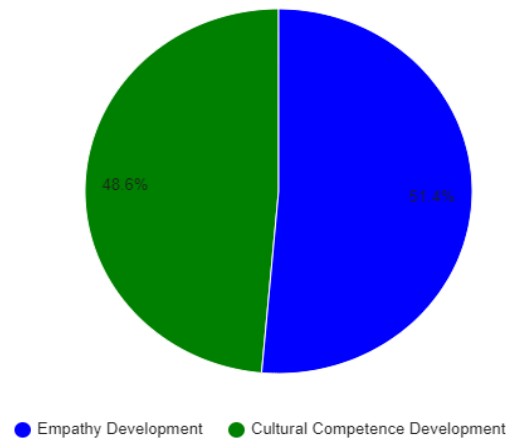
The study conducted by Cunningham and Zibulsky in (2013) showed that increased empathy and tolerance among people, students in particular, can be observed if they read multicultural books. In their research, they found that multicultural books assist learners in understanding characters' feelings and situations, thus improving their perspective of human nature. Lee and Carrasquillo (2006) indicated that multicultural literature can raise the overall level of cultural competency



amongst students due to the desire gained from the book to understand other cultures. Their research proved the following hypothesis: reading multicultural literature increases the level of cultural tolerance and no prejudiced attitudes toward other people. McGregor and Kearney (2012) established in their work that multicultural literature significantly helps in eradicating stereotype perceptions among the young learners in the respective class. The fact that multicultural books represent characters of different origins in interesting and positive positions also plays a crucial role in the deconstruction of prejudices. Another study by Ladson-Billings (1995) established that when multicultural literature is brought into the curriculum, students become more interested in what they are learning. Students are willing to participate in group discussions and activities when their cultures are included and when they actively learn about other cultures via books. According to Banks's research (2001), multicultural literature facilitates the development of critical thinking because it makes students think about personal values and perceptions. When encountering various opinions, the learners develop a critical mind and start thinking about the culture and social expectations more effectively. In multicultural literature, the students get a chance to learn the realities of other cultures; therefore, they are able to adopt the characters' lives, thus enhancing empathy. Literature, as defined by Bishop (1990), is a "looking glass" and a "vener" through which readers get to see themselves and others. When students' share and interact with stories that depict different cultures, he/she is able to relate to other people's feelings. Numerous philosophical, synoptic, and empirical studies prove that there is a statistical correlation between children's identification with characters' uplifting and/or stressful experiences in carriers different from themselves and their appreciation of interpersonal compassion (pp. 102–103, Sims Bishop, 1990; p. 243, Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000). Cultural competence can be defined as the ability to appreciate differences in culture, culture relativity, as well as business with people of different cultures. Multicultural literature in school allows students to learn different cultures and their belief systems, increasing their cultural capital. Culturally responsive teaching in Gay's (2000) view entails using multicultural books to foster a culturally sensitive curriculum as a way of embracing diversity. This exposure can foster in the students the desired attitudes and skills, which are important when it comes to cross cultural communications. There is semantic compliance because reading multicultural literature promotes critical thinking through the elimination of prejudice. One of them is the fact that when the groups are working on the assignments, students are exposed to other people's opinions and start questioning their own biases. According to McNair's (2003) study, multicultural literature can therefore help in eradicating prejudice and enhancing the appreciation of different cultures. Besides, the described process contributes to cultural sensitivity improvement among learners as well as creating a more tolerant environment in the class. Prior research shows that preliminary findings for including multicultural books in elementary school classrooms are useful. For instance, Adichie (2009) acknowledged that there is a "danger of a single story" thus the need to present more stories in classroom teaching; this reduces the risk of students developing culturally bounded perceptions on the same. Additionally, when implemented in curricula, multicultural literature enhances students' relevance and interest since they study familiar, real-

life experiences given in the texts (Landt, 2006). Multiple-literature, therefore, can be regarded as an essential facet of pedagogy with relation to the improvement of the above-said determinants of elementary education. In these ways, educators enlarge the possibility for students' disruptive thinking on how different people live in this world and can contribute to forming a more tolerant society related to globalization. The researched perspective approaching the benefits of multicultural literature for students' social and emotional growth is undeniable, and multicultural literature remains an essential aspect of education.

*Figure No: 04 Impact of Multicultural Literature on students Development*



The pie chart represents the impact of multicultural literature on student development, highlighting two primary areas: work culture, namely empathy and cultural competence. Empathy development is defined as the process of becoming sensitive to other people's feelings, making up 48 percent of the total. Cultural competence development was the largest category and included 51%, while staff training and development was 6%. Specifically, as for the primary reason for reading multicultural literature, the data indicates that by 4% more emphasis is placed on cultural competence than on empathy. Thus, the chart is quite useful and suggests that all the factors have a similar impact on the two aspects of student development. Thus, it is crucial that multicultural literature be included in curricula so as to create this balanced effect of empathy and education. Under these outcomes, the chart also implies that more studies must be conducted to discuss the factors in multicultural literature associated with these outcomes and perhaps even the different age groups or cultures' reactions. Teaching professionals ought to have the capability to address discussions that improve the compassion as well as cultural understanding of the learners, while the assessment processes should show the efficiency of such programs. Examining these findings in a deeper way could help answer other questions such as the difference in effects of multicultural literature to learners of different ages, components that





enhance the gain in empathy and cultural competence, and ways of evaluating the sustainability of the changes in learners' perspectives and behaviors.

## **Discussion**

There is sufficient empirical evidence on the effects multicultural literature has on the level of empathy and cultural competence in elementary education predating the year (2018). This discussion provides a summary of the findings and stresses the importance of implementing multicultural literature in teaching and learning activities. Studies have indicated that the inclusion of multicultural literature in elementary education leads to an improvement in students' empathy. Cunningham and Zibulsky (2013) proved that students who read multicultural books had better gross motor and fine motor skills, which is in line with Highershop's (1990) view that literature operates as a window and a mirror through which students can view different experiences as well as those of other people. as well as higher levels of empathy. This is in line with Bishop's (1990) view that literature operates as a window and a mirror through which students can view different experiences as well as those of other people. It explains how they multi culturally relate to the personalities developed in the books to enable them to gain an emotional insight on the characters 'true nature (Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000). In multicultural literature, the role of books is quite significant in the formation of cultural competency. In this regard, Lee & Carrasquillo (2006) affirmed that these books give insights on various cultural practices and values, which play roles in fostering tolerance for diversity. Multicultural literature brings diversity to apparent experiences and opinions about the world, as explained by Gay (2000) on cultural relations while teaching. It makes students acquire effective intercultural communication skills, and also creates a good learning environment for every student. Thus, multicultural literature also helps in making the negative stereotype a non-issue and gives people a chance to reconsider what they thought was true. In the study conducted by McGregor and Kearney (2012), it was revealed that such literature contributes to the process of eradicating biases as they depict characters belonging to various ethnicities in various and, at the same time, positive roles. This process makes students reconsider their prejudice and personal biases, thus increasing the chances of embracing inter culturalism (Banks, 2001). This is important today, as it is fatal when society is forcing its stereotyped views on learners and teachers. Integrating multicultural literature in the classroom has been found to be correlated with enhanced students' literature interest and enthusiasm. From a study conducted by Ladson-Billings (1995), the author established that students are willing to learn when their culture is reflected or when learning other cultures through reading. Such a level of engagement will foster enhanced interaction in a classroom environment because the student enhances his or her level of participation and learning. The uptake of multicultural literature fosters critical thinking since it involves the processing of stories that are different from the child's primary cultural experience. According to Banks (2001), learning through different cultures makes the students think about their own values and the culture of their society. Within this learning accomplishment, critical reflection

enhances students' analysis abilities and extends their perception to cultural problems, which fosters learners' cognitive and societal growth. The present research opens up many directions for implications to instruction at all levels, for pre-service and practicing teachers, as well as students. Pre-service teachers are a reasonable place to begin identifying such differences. Teacher candidates who join teacher preparation programs must be educated regarding their prejudices with and against diverse groups all through their program, and they should also be informed to manage and mitigate the tendencies. Teachers should be culturally competent to teach the students, and before they can become teachers, they should be culturally competent, and as they further their careers, they should enhance the cultural competence. Before it occurs, it is advised for teachers to receive training. Teachers need to be ready to listen, particularly to LGBT students, and be willing to modify their settings and course to suit the observations that they make them to establish purposeful multicultural classrooms, and these should also assert the advantages of multicultural education and cultural competence for both teachers and learners. Schools and classrooms are only going to become more diverse, and teachers and their administrations better start adapting to that. Therefore, the body of research from which this literature review stems must grow and develop in order to adequately serve teachers, students, and school employees.

## **Conclusion**

The discussion of findings highlighted above brings out the importance of including multicultural literature in elementary education. Inclusion of multicultural literature creates increased empathy, cultural competence, and critical thinking, hence improving the learning environment. It contributes to the elimination of prejudice, striving for tolerance to different cultures, and assists learners in thinking as to how they perceive things. The implemented multicultural literature contributes to effective practices in education not only for expanding the student's access to the subject matter but also for getting ready for the global environment. Incorporation of multicultural literature in the curriculum of elementary education has revealed positive outcomes for the development of empathy, cultural awareness, and analytical skills in the learners. Outdated data available before 2018 reveal that marked improvement in such exposure provides students with richer emotional perspective regarding other people, increases appreciation of diversity, and breaks stereotypical thinking patterns. The incorporation of multicultural literature in the selection of students' reading not only allows exposure to a diverse sample of cultures but also plays an essential role in fighting prejudice and making school more enjoyable. In this specific topic, students are provided with the ability to think about how other cultures are and thus be in a position to compile with other people in a proper way.

## **Future Directions**



The future research could possibly build upon the improvement of the multicultural literature by determining the existing variations in representation of multicultural populations and issues of modern society. This would also expose the students to a wider cross-section of global society and the tape of diversity; therefore, their perception would change. One of the thorough researches would be conducting longitudinal studies, which would offer an understanding of the effects of exposure to multicultural literature in the long run, including changes in the students' attitudes and behaviors. Hence, such studies would assist in defining the capacity of the students' cultural sensitivity and forgiveness over a certain period of time upon exposition to different stories at an early stage. More research focus is required when it comes to identifying ways of how multicultural books can be interjected across the curriculum, not just in language arts classes. With further investigation, studies could look at how multicultural literature can be integrated into other subjects such as social studies, science, and numerical education to deliver a combination of strategies. There is also a need for future studies to assess the effects of continued learning that concerns multicultural literature for professionals. It would be useful to know how training impacts the teacher's readiness to integrate and teach multicultural texts in their classrooms for enhancing the teaching pedagogy. Therefore, the survey could identify peculiarly effective multicultural literature programs and interventions submitted to the educational institutions and specifics of their implementation that might be helpful in developing the preferable strategies. Thus, this research might be useful in identifying specific and effective approaches to cultural sensitivity and understanding improvement among students. When considering these future directions, it is important for educators and researchers to advance the positive effects of multicultural literature and alleviate the current limited offering students must endure in today's classrooms.

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