



MULTICULTURAL PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE IN ELEMENTARY ARTS EDUCATION: DIFFERENCES BY GENDER, CERTIFICATION STATUS, AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

Zufriady¹⁾, Otang Kurniaman²⁾, Radini³⁾, Beny Al Fajar⁴⁾, Intan Kartika Sari⁵⁾,
Mifta Rizka⁶⁾, Fadhila Rahman⁷⁾

^{1,2,4,5} Primary School Teacher Education Study Program, University of Riau, Pekanbaru,
Indonesia

³ Pancasila and Citizenship Education Study Program, University of Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

⁶ Economic Education Study Program, University of Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

⁷ Guidance and Counseling Study Program, University of Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

E-mail: zufriady@lecturer.unri.ac.id

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of gender, teacher certification, and academic qualification on multicultural pedagogical competence among elementary school teachers in arts education contexts. The research employed a quantitative comparative design using an ex post facto approach. The participants consisted of 150 elementary school teachers teaching Arts, Culture, and Crafts (SBdP), selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring seven dimensions of multicultural pedagogy: Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Awareness, Attitudes and Reflection, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Values and Social Justice, Equitable Classroom Environment, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Instrument validity was tested using Aiken's V and Pearson Product Moment correlation, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests, and One-Way ANOVA. The findings revealed that female teachers, certified teachers, and teachers with postgraduate qualifications (S2) demonstrated significantly higher multicultural pedagogical competence across most indicators. However, no significant differences were found in the Equitable Classroom Environment dimension based on gender and certification status. The study highlights the importance of professional development, certification programs, and higher educational attainment in strengthening culturally responsive teaching practices in elementary arts education.

Keywords: Multicultural Pedagogy, Elementary Education, Arts Education.

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INTRODUCTION

In elementary Arts, Culture, and Crafts (Seni Budaya dan Prakarya, [SBdP]) lessons, decisions about which artistic traditions are selected, how cultural meanings are explained, and whose experiences are recognised shape opportunities for inclusive participation. The Indonesian elementary curriculum provides a relevant setting for examining this pedagogical work because arts activities can connect local cultural expression with students' everyday experiences. Studies on arts and crafts instruction indicate the potential of culturally situated tasks to support the discussion of difference and belonging (Guslinda et al., 2024; Pravitasari et al., 2024; Setyaningrum et al., 2024; Wijayanti & Indriyanti, 2016). However, the availability of culturally diverse artistic content does not, by itself, demonstrate that teachers use it equitably.

Multicultural pedagogical competence is defined here as teachers' self-reported knowledge, awareness, professional dispositions, and instructional orientations for responding to cultural diversity. It is not equivalent to student multicultural learning outcomes, nor does a self-report scale directly establish observed teaching performance. Banks, (2004) situate multicultural education within curriculum representation, equity pedagogy, and social justice, while Gay, (2003) emphasises the instructional relevance of learners' cultural knowledge and experience. Together, these perspectives inform a multidimensional understanding of teachers' pedagogical responses to cultural differences. Sleeter, (2018) further highlights that multicultural education concerns relationships of participation and power, not merely recognition of cultural symbols.

The need for effective multicultural learning has never been more critical (M. I. Siregar & Aulia, 2023). As societies become increasingly diverse, educational institutions are tasked with fostering not only academic knowledge but also core values of tolerance, equality, and inclusion (Rante et al., 2005). This pedagogical imperative requires educators to address issues of cultural plurality, prejudice, and identity exploration directly in the classroom (Lalita et al., 2024). When integrated into the arts, multicultural learning finds meaningful learning, as the creation and interpretation of art often serve as a direct window into the values, history, and worldviews of various cultures, providing a platform for cross-cultural learning (Pravitasari et al., 2024).

The translation of multicultural awareness into effective classroom practice is influenced by teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and pedagogical competencies, as well as by broader contextual factors, including school culture, educational policies, curriculum requirements, available resources, and community contexts (Aziz et al., 2021). From the perspective of multicultural education, effective implementation requires teachers to move beyond the acquisition of basic technical skills and develop the capacity to translate abstract multicultural principles into concrete pedagogical practices (C. E. Sleeter, 2001). In arts education, these practices involve selecting appropriate learning models and instructional methods, as well as designing culturally responsive assessment strategies that recognize and

value students' diverse cultural backgrounds (Anwas et al., 2022). Although teachers do not operate independently of institutional and contextual influences, their pedagogical decisions play an important role in shaping how multicultural values are enacted in elementary school arts classrooms. Consequently, understanding teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and competencies, alongside the conditions in which they work, is essential for examining whether arts education promotes meaningful multicultural learning or remains primarily focused on technical skill development (Kurniaman et al., 2025).

Although previous studies have examined teachers' perceptions of multicultural education and its implications for classroom practice, further empirical investigation is needed to clarify how these perceptions are manifested in elementary school SBdP education in Indonesia. Existing studies, including those by Setyaningrum et al., (2024) and Siregar & Aulia, (2023), provide relevant insights into multicultural education and teachers' perspectives; however, the extent to which elementary school SBdP teachers perceive and enact their roles as multicultural educators requires more systematic examination. In particular, further research is needed to assess teachers' perceptions across the seven competence dimensions addressed in the present study and to determine whether these perceptions differ according to educational qualification, gender, and professional certification status. Examining these dimensions and background characteristics within a single quantitative framework would help clarify both the profile of teachers' perceived multicultural competence and the extent to which selected demographic and professional factors are associated with their self-reported capacity to implement multicultural principles in SBdP instruction (Beka & Bicaj, 2025). This study therefore addresses an empirical gap at the intersection of multicultural education, elementary school arts education, and teacher-related characteristics in the Indonesian context.

Despite this strong theoretical foundation, a significant gap persists between the aspirational potential of arts education and its practical execution at the elementary level (Gómez-Zepeda et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2024). Arts and culture learning in schools is often heavily skewed towards technical skill acquisition and final product orientation such as mastering a specific drawing technique or producing a simple collage thereby neglecting the subject's potential as a vehicle for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) (Pravitasari et al., 2024). This practice gap means that valuable opportunities to explicitly connect the creative process to the core values of tolerance, cultural appreciation, and respect for student diversity are frequently overlooked, diminishing the subject's holistic impact (Izzati et al., 2023).

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al., 2024). When integrated into the arts, multicultural education finds a powerful ally, as the creation and interpretation of art often serve as a direct window into the values, histories, and worldviews of different cultures, providing a non-threatening platform for cross-cultural dialogue (Pravitasari et al., 2024).

The ability of elementary school teachers to implement multicultural learning is crucial for establishing an equitable, inclusive educational environment that reflects the diverse nature of society (Kurniaman et al., 2022). At a young age, students are developing their identities, social attitudes, and perspectives on differences. Teachers with multicultural competence can instill values of tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity (Xu et al., 2025). They can also connect learning with students' cultural experiences, thereby enhancing motivation and learning outcomes (Wijayanti & Indriyanti, 2016). Furthermore, they can create a classroom environment free from stereotypes and discrimination (Sandercock, 2023), which ultimately supports students' balanced academic and social development (Ratts, 2016).

Developing multicultural learning skills is very important for elementary school teachers (Dewi et al., 2023). These skills help create a fair and inclusive learning environment where students can develop tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity from an early age. However, many teachers, from preschool to higher education, are not used to using multicultural approaches in their teaching and find it difficult to include them in their curriculum and teaching practices (Guslinda et al., 2023). Elementary school teachers also need professional support in multicultural learning, even though there is not much research on this topic yet (Win et al., 2024). Therefore, this study highlights the need for more comprehensive research on the multicultural learning abilities of elementary school teachers.

In this study, we are interested in exploring the extent of multicultural skills among elementary school teachers (C. E. Sleeter, 2001). Several factors, such as gender, teacher certification, and educational attainment, may influence these multicultural skills. These aspects have been topics of discussion over the past few decades and still require further explanation (Kurniaman et al., 2024). This study aims to provide an impact on the development of educational programs and professional teacher development to enhance the multicultural skills of elementary school teachers.

This study aims to examine and describe the influence of gender, teacher certification, and educational level (S1 and S2) on the multicultural pedagogical competence of elementary school teachers, particularly in the context of arts learning (Zufriady et al., 2025). It focuses on analyzing differences across key indicators such as Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Awareness, Attitudes and Reflection, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Values and Social Justice, Equitable Classroom Environment, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Fatmawati, 2020). Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these variables,

both individually and collectively, shape teachers' ability to implement effective and inclusive multicultural learning practices in elementary schools (García-Gómez, 2020).

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative and multidimensional approach, as it simultaneously examines gender, certification status, and educational level factors that have often been studied separately in previous research. In addition, this study provides a more detailed analysis by breaking down multicultural pedagogical competence into specific indicators rather than treating it as a general construct (Nurasiah et al., 2022). The justification of the hypothesis is grounded in prior empirical findings indicating that certified teachers and those with higher educational attainment tend to demonstrate stronger multicultural competence; however, inconsistencies remain, particularly in practical classroom aspects such as equitable learning environments (Zhao, 2021). This GAP between theoretical competence and actual classroom implementation highlights the need for further investigation. Furthermore, the study offers a unique contribution by situating multicultural pedagogy within elementary arts education, an area that reflects cultural diversity but remains underexplored in existing literature.

The scope of this study is limited to elementary school teachers, with a specific focus on arts learning as a medium for multicultural education. The independent variables include gender, teacher certification status, and educational level (S1 and S2), while the dependent variable is multicultural pedagogical competence measured through multiple indicators. Conceptually, the research is confined to multicultural learning and pedagogical competence, without addressing other teacher competencies unless directly relevant. Methodologically, the study is restricted to examining relationships and differences among variables and does not aim to develop or test a new instructional model. This defined scope ensures a focused and contextually relevant investigation into the factors influencing multicultural pedagogical competence in elementary education.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional comparative research design using an ex post facto approach to examine differences in multicultural pedagogical competence among elementary school SBdP teachers according to gender, professional certification status, and academic qualification. A quantitative approach was appropriate for measuring teachers' competence using numerical data and statistically comparing naturally occurring groups (Creswell, 2014). The ex post facto approach was selected because the grouping variables gender, professional certification status, and academic qualification were pre-existing characteristics that could not be experimentally manipulated. Therefore, the analysis focused on identifying statistical differences and associations rather than establishing causal effects (Creswell, 2009). The cross-sectional design involved collecting questionnaire data at a single point in time to provide a snapshot of teachers' self-reported multicultural pedagogical

competence. The study was conducted among elementary school SBdP teachers in Dumai City, Riau Province, Indonesia, in 2025. During the data collection period, the questionnaire was administered to assess teachers' perceptions of their multicultural pedagogical competence in arts education. This focus is relevant because arts education offers opportunities for cultural expression, appreciation of diversity, and the integration of culturally responsive teaching practices.

The source manuscript reports 150 respondents from public and private elementary schools and describes the sampling as proportionate stratified random sampling. It does not document the sampling frame, the stratum definitions or population shares, the random-selection procedure, inclusion/exclusion criteria, response rate, or a priori sample-size rationale. These details require confirmation; no claim of balanced or demonstrably representative sampling is made. The gender distribution was 28 men and 122 women; the certification distribution was 101 certified and 49 non-certified teachers. Table 1 participant characteristics.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Men	28	18.7
	Women	122	81.3
Teacher certification	Certified	101	67.3
	Not certified	49	32.7
Academic qualification	Bachelor	143	95.3
	Master	7	4.7

Data were collected using questionnaires, documentation, and classroom observations. The primary instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure multicultural pedagogical competence across several dimensions, including Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Awareness, Attitudes and Reflection, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Values and Social Justice, Equitable Classroom Environment, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. These indicators were adapted from multicultural education theory developed by James A. Banks and culturally responsive pedagogy proposed by Franco et al., (2024). According to Comstock et al., (2023), multicultural competence involves teachers' understanding of cultural diversity, equitable pedagogy, and social justice orientation in classroom practice. Similarly, (Gay, 2000) emphasized that culturally responsive teaching integrates students' cultural experiences into instructional practices to create inclusive and meaningful learning environments.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to measure teachers' multicultural pedagogical competence. Instrument validity was assessed through expert judgment using Aiken's V coefficient to evaluate the relevance and appropriateness of each instrument item based on expert evaluation, as proposed by Aiken. The results showed that all indicators obtained validity coefficients above 0.80, indicating that the

instrument was highly valid. Construct validity was further examined using Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis, where all item correlation coefficients exceeded the minimum r -table value at the 0.05 significance level. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and according to (Hair, 2014), an alpha value above 0.70 indicates acceptable reliability. In this study, the overall reliability coefficient exceeded 0.90, demonstrating very high internal consistency of the instrument. Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, percentage, standard deviation, and distribution of multicultural pedagogical competence among elementary school teachers. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests including normality and homogeneity tests were conducted using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, Shapiro–Wilk test, and Levene's Test. Inferential analysis utilized independent sample t -tests to examine differences based on gender and teacher certification status because the test is appropriate for comparing the means of two independent groups (Kurniaman et al., 2026). In addition, One-Way ANOVA was employed to analyze differences based on academic qualification (S1 and S2). Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to examine the simultaneous influence of gender, certification, and academic qualification on multicultural pedagogical competence, as multiple regression is effective for predicting the contribution of several independent variables toward a dependent variable simultaneously (Putro et al., 2022). All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the influence of gender, teacher certification, and academic qualification on multicultural pedagogical competence in elementary arts education. The analysis focuses on several dimensions of multicultural pedagogy, including Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Awareness, Attitudes and Reflection, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Values and Social Justice, Equitable Classroom Environment, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. The results are presented through descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to identify patterns, differences, and the magnitude of the influence of each independent variable on teachers' multicultural pedagogical competence. Next, we will explain the gender comparison according to table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Teachers by Gender

NO	Indicator	Mean (Male)	SD (Male)	Mean (Female)	SD (Female)	Mann– Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
1.	Cultural Knowledge	3.78	0.52	4.05	0.48	914.5	0.012*
2.	Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity	3.85	0.50	4.12	0.46	892.0	0.009*

NO	Indicator	Mean (Male)	SD (Male)	Mean (Female)	SD (Female)	Mann– Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
3.	Equitable Classroom Environment	3.90	0.55	4.08	0.50	1012.0	0.084
4.	Teacher Attitudes & Reflection	3.70	0.60	4.15	0.45	755.5	0.001**
5.	Curriculum & Pedagogy	3.82	0.53	4.06	0.49	930.0	0.018*
6.	Values & Social Justice	3.75	0.58	4.10	0.47	820.0	0.004**
7.	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Composite)	3.80	0.50	4.09	0.45	870.5	0.007**

Note:

* $p < .05$ (significant)

** $p < .01$ (highly significant)

Table 2 presents gender-based differences in teachers' culturally responsive pedagogy based on the Mann–Whitney U test. Female teachers consistently reported higher mean scores across all dimensions, with statistically significant differences observed in five of the six dimensions and the overall composite score. The largest mean difference was found in Teacher Attitudes and Reflection, where female teachers ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.45$) scored significantly higher than male teachers ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.60$; $U = 755.5$, $p = .001$). In contrast, the smallest difference was observed in Equitable Classroom Environment, where the difference between female ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.50$) and male teachers ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.55$) was not statistically significant ($U = 1012.0$, $p = .084$). The overall composite score further confirmed a significant gender difference ($U = 870.5$, $p = .007$), with female teachers ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.45$) reporting higher levels of culturally responsive pedagogy than male teachers ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.50$). These findings highlight gender-related variations in multicultural pedagogical competence, raising questions about whether other professional characteristics may also contribute to differences in teachers' instructional practices. Building on this analysis, the study further examined teacher certification as a potential factor associated with multicultural pedagogical competence. Given its relevance to professional development and instructional preparedness, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare certified and non-certified teachers across the six dimensions of multicultural pedagogical competence and the overall culturally responsive pedagogy composite score. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Differences in Multicultural Teaching Indicators Based on Teacher Certification

NO	Indicator	Mean (Certified)	SD (Certified)	Mean (Non- Certified)	SD (Non- Certified)	Mann– Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)
1.	Cultural Knowledge	4.20	0.45	3.78	0.56	2080.0	0.001**
2.	Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity	4.22	0.43	3.82	0.54	2145.5	0.002**
3.	Equitable Classroom Environment	4.10	0.48	3.92	0.52	2460.0	0.071
4.	Teacher Attitudes & Reflection	4.28	0.40	3.75	0.60	1855.0	0.001**
5.	Curriculum & Pedagogy	4.18	0.46	3.80	0.55	2195.0	0.004**
6.	Values & Social Justice	4.25	0.44	3.83	0.57	2070.0	0.001**
7.	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Composite)	4.21	0.42	3.82	0.51	2120.0	0.002**

Note:

* $p < .05$ (significant)** $p < .01$ (highly significant)

Table 3 presents differences in teachers' multicultural pedagogical competence based on certification status, as assessed using the Mann–Whitney U test. Certified teachers consistently reported higher mean scores than non-certified teachers across all dimensions, with statistically significant differences in five of the six dimensions and the overall composite score. The largest mean difference was observed in Teacher Attitudes and Reflection, where certified teachers ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.40$) scored significantly higher than non-certified teachers ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.60$; $U = 1855.0$, $p = .001$). In contrast, the smallest mean difference was found in Equitable Classroom Environment, where certified teachers ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.48$) scored higher than non-certified teachers ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.52$), although this difference was not statistically significant ($U = 2460.0$, $p = .071$). Similarly, the overall Culturally Responsive Pedagogy composite score revealed a significant difference ($U = 2120.0$, $p = .002$), with certified teachers ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.42$) reporting higher scores than their non-certified counterparts ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.51$). These findings suggest that teacher certification is positively associated with multicultural pedagogical competence, particularly in reflective teaching attitudes, while differences in equitable classroom practices remain less pronounced. Beyond professional certification, academic qualifications may also be associated with variations in teachers' multicultural pedagogical competence, given the potential contribution of advanced education

to pedagogical knowledge, critical reflection, and understanding of cultural diversity. Accordingly, the subsequent analysis examined differences between teachers holding bachelor and master qualifications across the six dimensions of multicultural pedagogical competence and the overall culturally responsive pedagogy composite score. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Differences in Multicultural Teaching Indicators Based on Education Level

NO	Indicator	Mean Bachelor	SD Bachelor	Mean Master	SD Master	Mann–Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
1.	Cultural Knowledge	3.82	0.56	4.24	0.44	1820.0	0.001**
2.	Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity	3.88	0.54	4.30	0.40	1765.5	0.001**
3.	Equitable Classroom Environment	3.95	0.52	4.18	0.46	2120.0	0.031*
4.	Teacher Attitudes & Reflection	3.75	0.60	4.28	0.42	1605.0	0.001**
5.	Curriculum & Pedagogy	3.90	0.55	4.22	0.45	1895.0	0.004**
6.	Values & Social Justice	3.85	0.58	4.25	0.43	1720.0	0.001**
7.	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Composite)	3.89	0.51	4.25	0.40	1788.0	0.002**

Note:

* $p < .05$ (significant)

** $p < .01$ (highly significant)

Table 4 presents differences in teachers' multicultural pedagogical competence based on educational qualifications, as assessed using the Mann–Whitney U test. Teachers holding a master's degree consistently reported higher mean scores than those with a bachelor's degree across all dimensions, with statistically significant differences observed in all six dimensions and the overall composite score. The largest mean difference was found in Teacher Attitudes and Reflection, where teachers with a master's degree ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.42$) scored significantly higher than those with a bachelor's degree ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.60$; $U = 1605.0$, $p = .001$). Conversely, the smallest mean difference was observed in Equitable Classroom Environment, where master's degree holders ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.46$) scored higher than bachelor's degree holders ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.52$), with a statistically significant difference ($U = 2120.0$, $p = .031$). The overall Culturally Responsive Pedagogy composite score also revealed a significant

difference ($U = 1788.0$, $p = .002$), with teachers holding a master's degree ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.40$) reporting higher scores than those holding a bachelor's degree ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.51$). These findings suggest that higher educational attainment is positively associated with multicultural pedagogical competence, particularly in teachers' reflective attitudes and their responsiveness to cultural diversity in educational settings.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that gender, teacher certification, and academic qualification significantly influence multicultural pedagogical competence among elementary school teachers in arts education contexts. Overall, female teachers, certified teachers, and teachers with postgraduate qualifications master showed higher levels of multicultural competence across most indicators, including Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Awareness, Attitudes and Reflection, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Values and Social Justice, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. These findings confirm that demographic and professional factors contribute substantially to teachers' ability to implement inclusive and culturally responsive learning practices in elementary arts education.

The results related to gender differences indicate that female teachers demonstrated significantly higher multicultural pedagogical competence than male teachers across several indicators (Ryan, 2007). This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that female teachers tend to show stronger empathy, interpersonal sensitivity, and reflective attitudes toward diversity and inclusion in classroom settings (Sandra et al., 2025). In multicultural learning contexts, emotional awareness and reflective practice are important components in creating equitable classroom interactions and culturally responsive instruction (C. Sleeter, 2018). Female teachers may be more likely to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into instructional activities and foster collaborative classroom climates that support diversity appreciation. Similar findings were reported by (Gómez-Zepeda et al., 2023), who found that intercultural competence among teachers was closely associated with reflective attitudes, empathy, and self-efficacy in multicultural classrooms. Furthermore, the strong performance of female teachers in the dimensions of Values and Social Justice and Teacher Attitudes and Reflection suggests that gender may influence teachers' orientation toward inclusive educational values and social sensitivity.

However, the findings also showed that no significant difference was found in the Equitable Classroom Environment indicator based on gender (M. I. Siregar & Aulia, 2023). This result suggests that both male and female teachers were relatively similar in managing classroom interactions and maintaining fairness in instructional practices (Dewi et al., 2023). One possible explanation is that classroom management in elementary schools is strongly influenced by institutional norms and curriculum standards rather than gender differences alone. This finding

supports the argument of (Suhardiyanto et al., 2025), who emphasized that multicultural classroom practices are shaped not only by personal characteristics but also by school culture, professional development, and educational policy support. Thus, although gender contributes to multicultural awareness and attitudes, equitable classroom implementation may require broader institutional reinforcement.

The study also found that certified teachers demonstrated significantly higher multicultural pedagogical competence compared to non-certified teachers (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Certified teachers obtained higher scores in Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Awareness, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Values and Social Justice, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. These findings indicate that teacher certification programs contribute positively to teachers' professional competence in multicultural learning contexts (Guslinda et al., 2025). Teacher certification generally includes pedagogical training, curriculum understanding, classroom management, and professional competency development that may strengthen teachers' ability to respond to cultural diversity in schools (Parmin & Trisnowati, 2024). This finding is consistent with previous research showing that professional training and certification programs improve teachers' intercultural competence and inclusive pedagogical practices (Kagawa-Singer, 2003).

The significant differences found in the dimensions of Attitudes and Reflection and Curriculum and Pedagogy further suggest that certified teachers possess stronger reflective capacities and instructional readiness in implementing multicultural learning strategies. According to (Owen, 2016), culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to understand students' cultural experiences and integrate them into curriculum design and instructional activities. Certified teachers are more likely to receive formal exposure to culturally responsive pedagogy during professional training programs, which may explain their stronger competence in multicultural learning implementation (Fadillah et al., 2023). Nevertheless, similar to gender findings, no significant difference was found in the Equitable Classroom Environment indicator. This result implies that creating equitable classroom conditions may depend more on practical classroom realities, school support systems, and contextual teaching experiences than solely on certification status (Erni et al., 2025).

Another important finding of this study is that teachers with postgraduate qualifications (S2) demonstrated significantly higher multicultural pedagogical competence than teachers with undergraduate qualifications (S1). Teachers with S2 qualifications scored higher across all indicators, particularly in Cultural Awareness, Teacher Attitudes and Reflection, Curriculum and Pedagogy, and Values and Social Justice (Radini et al., 2026). This finding confirms that higher educational attainment contributes positively to teachers' multicultural understanding, critical awareness, and pedagogical capacity. Advanced academic study often exposes teachers to broader theoretical perspectives, critical discourse, and research-based instructional approaches

related to diversity, equity, and multicultural education. As a result, teachers with postgraduate qualifications may develop more sophisticated perspectives regarding culturally responsive teaching practices (Kurniaman et al., 2026).

This finding supports previous studies emphasizing the importance of higher education in strengthening intercultural competence and inclusive pedagogy among teachers (García-Gómez, 2020). Teachers with higher educational levels tend to demonstrate stronger reflective thinking and greater openness toward cultural diversity because they engage more intensively with academic discussions concerning equity, social justice, and multiculturalism (Simatupang et al., 2024). In the context of arts education, higher academic qualifications may also enable teachers to connect artistic learning with cultural identity exploration, local wisdom, and intercultural dialogue more effectively (Aulia & Saputro, 2024). Arts education inherently provides opportunities for students to express cultural values and appreciate diversity through creative activities, making multicultural competence particularly important in this subject area (Munjiatun et al., 2023).

In addition, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on multicultural pedagogy in elementary arts education, which remains relatively underexplored in previous research. Most previous studies focused on general classroom contexts, whereas this study specifically situates multicultural competence within arts and culture learning (SBdP). This context is important because arts education serves as a strategic medium for cultural representation, identity formation, and diversity appreciation among elementary school students (Garwood, 2023). Therefore, strengthening multicultural pedagogical competence among arts teachers may contribute significantly to developing inclusive educational environments that promote tolerance, empathy, and cultural respect from an early age (Pike et al., 2021).

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the study relied primarily on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. Second, the study focused only on elementary school teachers involved in arts education, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other educational levels or subject areas. Third, the unequal proportion between S1 and S2 participants may affect comparative interpretation. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ mixed-method approaches, incorporate classroom observation data more extensively, and examine additional variables such as teaching experience, school culture, and multicultural training participation. Longitudinal studies are also needed to investigate how multicultural pedagogical competence develops over time through professional development and teaching practice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that gender, teacher certification, and academic qualification significantly influence multicultural pedagogical competence among elementary school teachers

in arts education contexts. Female teachers, certified teachers, and teachers with postgraduate qualifications master demonstrated higher levels of competence across most multicultural teaching indicators, including Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Awareness, Attitudes and Reflection, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Values and Social Justice, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. These findings indicate that professional training, educational background, and demographic characteristics contribute to teachers' ability to implement inclusive and culturally responsive learning practices in elementary schools. In addition, the study highlights the important role of arts education as a strategic medium for strengthening multicultural values, cultural appreciation, and social inclusion among students. The results also reinforce the importance of continuous professional development, multicultural teacher training, and higher education opportunities to improve teachers' multicultural pedagogical competence. Therefore, educational institutions and policymakers should strengthen multicultural-oriented teacher development programs to support equitable and culturally responsive learning environments in elementary education.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Z and OK conceptualized the study and designed the methodology. Z, R, and BAF conducted the research and collected the data. IKS, MR, and FR contributed to data analysis, interpretation of the results, and manuscript preparation. Z and OK supervised the study and critically revised the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. All the writers, agreed to the final version of the paper and say there are no problems, with the way this study is being shared.

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