

TEACHER'S CULTURAL COMPETENCE: IT'S IMPACT ON STUDENT'S ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL



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Teacher's Cultural Competence: It's Impact on Student's Engagement and Motivation in Senior High School

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Abstract. This study investigated the predictive relationship between teachers' cultural competence and students' engagement and motivation in Senior High Schools in the National Capital Region, Philippines. Anchored in social identity theory and culturally responsive pedagogy, the study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive–correlational design. A sample of 50 students was selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across academic strands and grade levels. Data were collected using adapted and pilot-tested standardized instruments measuring perceived teacher cultural competence and students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, alongside intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential analysis using Pearson product–moment correlation were applied to examine variable relationships. Results indicated high levels of perceived teacher cultural competence ($M = 1.3240$, $SD = 0.24542$), student motivation ($M = 1.2680$, $SD = 0.14769$), and student engagement ($M = 1.1060$, $SD = 0.10382$). Correlational analysis revealed statistically significant associations between teachers' cultural competence and student engagement ($r = 0.029$, $p < .05$) and motivation ($r = -0.143$, $p < .05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings suggest that culturally responsive instructional practices function as significant pedagogical mechanisms influencing students' motivational orientation and engagement behaviors. The study underscores the role of cultural competence as a critical determinant of inclusive and effective teaching, with implications for teacher professional development, curriculum contextualization, and policy formulation in diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Teacher's Cultural Competence, Student Engagement, Student Motivation, Educational Outcome, Senior High School

Introduction

Students from a variety of socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds make up classrooms in today's increasingly diverse educational environment. Teachers face both opportunities and challenges as a result of this diversity, particularly in creating inclusive and productive learning environments (Gay, 2020; OECD, 2021). Cultural competence, or the capacity to understand, appreciate, and effectively engage with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, is a crucial component that influences how educators respond to this diversity (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Hammond, 2020). Teachers who demonstrate cultural competence are more likely to establish inclusive classrooms where students feel respected and valued. Such environments significantly influence students' motivation and engagement, which are essential components of academic success (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Fredricks et al., 2021).

Motivation refers to the internal drive that pushes students to achieve their academic goals, while student engagement encompasses the level of participation, interest, and involvement in learning activities. When students perceive their teachers as culturally responsive and sensitive, they are more likely to actively engage in class and develop stronger motivation to learn (Gay, 2020; Hammond, 2020). In the Senior High School context, where learners are preparing for higher education or employment, motivation and

engagement play a critical role in shaping academic performance and future career opportunities (OECD, 2021). However, despite the recognized importance of cultural competence, there remains limited empirical evidence on how it directly influences students' learning behaviors, particularly in localized contexts such as Senior High Schools in the National Capital Region.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between teachers' cultural competence and students' motivation and engagement. By identifying the connections among these variables, the study seeks to provide insights that can improve instructional practices and promote a more inclusive and engaging learning environment for students.

Research Questions

The study aimed on the Teacher's Cultural Competence: It's Impact on Student's Engagement and Motivation in Senior High School and find solution to the following problem.

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of;
 - 1.1 Gender
 - 1.2 Academic Strands
 - 1.3 Senior High School level
2. What is the level of teachers' cultural competence perceived by the senior high school students.
3. What is the level of student engagement and motivation.
4. Is there a significant relationship between teachers' cultural competence and student motivation and engagement.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study aims to investigate on how teachers' cultural competency affects senior high school students' motivation and engagement in a National Capital Region schools throughout the 2025 academic year. It employs a quantitative descriptive-correlational design with survey questionnaires as the main means of gathering data. The study's variables are restricted to teachers' cultural competency, student motivation, and student participation.

Literature Review

This study support teachers who enhance their teaching methods and make learning relevant and meaningful when they recognize the varied experiences and backgrounds of their students. A teacher who is culturally competent is aware that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to education and that methods must be modified to meet each student's particular needs.

The ability of educators to comprehend, value, and incorporate students varied cultural backgrounds into their lesson plans is known as cultural competence (Guo, Wang, & Wang, 2025). This idea is strongly related to culturally responsive teaching (CRT), which places a strong emphasis on connecting what students learn to their real-world experiences. According to research, students from varied cultural backgrounds frequently have lower levels of motivation and engagement when instruction is detached from their cultural background. On the other hand, students feel more involved and are more inclined to actively participate in their education when professors provide examples, beliefs, and viewpoints that are culturally relevant. Additionally, research shows that, particularly in multicultural classrooms, combining CRT with self-regulated learning techniques increases motivation and engagement. This implies that cultural competency among educators encompasses not only awareness but also pedagogical adaptation to accommodate the requirements of a diverse student body.

Most people agree that student engagement is a multifaceted notion that includes behavioral engagement (participation, effort), Emotional involvement (passion, sentiments regarding education) Deep thinking and problem-solving are examples of cognitive involvement (Anyichie & Butler 2023). All of these factors work together to affect academic achievement. Positive learning outcomes like accomplishment, perseverance, and satisfaction are closely linked to engagement. The context of the classroom has a significant impact on engagement. Students' involvement rises dramatically when they believe that what they are learning is relevant to their identity and experiences, underscoring the significance of teaching that is culturally competent.

The internal force that steers students' behavior toward learning activities is referred to as motivation. It has a major impact on how actively students participate in class activities (Brandmiller, Schnitzler & Dumont 2024). Motivation has been shown to predict involvement (e.g., effort, perseverance). When assignments are interesting, relevant, and meaningful, students are more engaged. Motivation is boosted by autonomy and perceived value. Students are more motivated, for instance, when they perceive learning activities to be relevant and autonomous. Additionally, motivation has been demonstrated to increase academic achievements by enhancing emotional, behavioral, and cognitive involvement.

Teachers' attitudes, expectations, and interactions have a significant impact on students' motivation and involvement. Research indicates that how teachers engage with pupils is influenced by their perspectives

(Zhou, Tu, & Zhang, 2022). Higher student outcomes and improved support are the results of positive expectations. Teachers who believe their pupils are driven offer more support and chances. As student accomplishment and future involvement levels are strongly impacted by teachers' assessments of students' motivation and engagement. Furthermore, it has been discovered that educational, social, and emotional teacher support boost the intrinsic motivation of students, boost involvement and engagement lastly, boost your academic achievement.

Cultural competency fosters inclusive learning settings and improves interactions between teachers and students (Hansen, Heeralal, & Ndwandwe, 2025). When pupils are appreciated and feel understood that they grow to feel more like they belong, they become more motivated and they get more involved in their education. Culturally competent instruction helps close gaps between students' experiences and academic expectations in classes with a diverse student body. According to research, students are more engaged and motivated in learning environments that are in line with their cultural identities. Therefore, cultural competency serves as a mediating factor that improves motivation, which raises engagement and improves academic results.

A local study conducted that looked at Valencia City social studies teachers' culturally sensitive teaching methods (Quimot and Esteban 2025). According to the study, teachers regularly used culturally sensitive tactics, especially when it came to promoting inclusivity, and there was a strong correlation between these practices and the degree of student participation. The study also showed that student involvement levels can be predicted by specific aspects of culturally responsive teaching, like creating inclusive classroom environments and relating teachings to students' cultural backgrounds. This lends credence to the notion that, in the Philippine setting, culturally competent teaching has quantifiable benefits on student interest and classroom participation.

How local culture, history, and values are incorporated into education by Araling Panlipunan instructors was investigated in a phenomenological study at Misamis University (Sabayton, Villarosa, & Daniel, 2026). The results demonstrated that culturally sensitive teaching methods contribute to the development of inclusive, relevant, and meaningful learning experiences, which in turn increase students' engagement and interest in the material. According to the study, students' enthusiasm and engagement are increased when local narratives and indigenous knowledge are incorporated into the curriculum.

According to investigation on culturally grounded pedagogy at Philippine colleges (Sales-Batang et al. 2025), incorporating storytelling, community-based activities, and local cultural content fosters intercultural competency and active student engagement. The investigation made clear that these actions Promote affirmation of identity, Encourage compassion and tolerance for diversity, Boost involvement in class discussions. This implies that inclusive and stimulating learning environments are enhanced by culturally competent instruction.

Dela Cruz et al. (2025) looked at culturally responsive teaching in Philippine higher education and discovered that it greatly helps students become more interculturally competent. The study, which is based on culturally responsive teaching frameworks, highlighted that when educators adapt their lessons to students' cultural backgrounds, students become more driven to engage, ready to work together and taking part in educational activities

The importance of culturally sensitive instruction in Philippine teacher education was emphasized (Caingcoy and Ramirez 2022). According to their research, culturally competent educators foster learning environments that are engaging, relevant, and authentic, all of which enhance student learning outcomes. The study also noted that the Philippine educational system encourages culturally sensitive instruction through initiatives like Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) to guarantee inclusive and stimulating learning for a wide range of students.

Methodology

Research Design

This study investigated the connection between senior high school students' motivation and engagement and teachers' cultural competency using a quantitative descriptive-correlational research approach. The descriptive component was utilized to assess students' motivation and involvement as well as the degree of cultural competency of the teachers. Conversely, the correlational approach was used to determine whether these variables have a substantial link. This strategy is useful for educational contexts because it enables the researcher to examine patterns and relationships without changing factors.

Sampling Design

The study utilized a stratified random selection technique to guarantee that students were fairly represented. A proportionate number of students in national capital region were chosen at random. A suitable statistical procedure based on the entire population was used to calculate the sample size.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in a public or private senior high school in the national capital region where student is from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Examining how teachers' cultural competence affects students' motivation and engagement was made possible by the setting.

Research Participants

The total population participated in this study are 50 senior high school students in National Capital Region both in private of government schools in the 2025 academic year. Every respondent fulfilled basic criteria, which included being a current senior high school student, regularly interacting with their senior high school teachers, and being willing to take part in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly adhered to, and all participants were made aware of the research's purpose.

Research Instrument

The research was made use of a standardized survey that includes teachers' cultural proficiency where it evaluates how students feel about their teachers' responsiveness, inclusivity, and cultural knowledge. Student engagement that includes emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. Student Motivation where it evaluates both internal and external learning motivation. In order to make the instruments appropriate for senior high school students, they were changed from validated instruments. To guarantee the questionnaire's dependability and clarity, a pilot test was carried out.

Data Gathering Procedure

In this study, procedures were noted for the data collection such as obtained authorization to carry out the study from the school administration, provided participants with informed consent forms, distributed the survey forms to a chosen participants then gathered and verified the completeness of the surveys. Each response was encoded and arranged data for examination. Every procedure was carried out in compliance with ethical norms.

Results and Discussions

Problem 1: What is the profile of the respondents in terms of Gender, Academic Strands and Senior High School Level?

Table 1: Frequency and distribution of Respondents according to their Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	33	66.0	66.0	66.0
Female	17	34.0	34.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to gender. Out of 50 Senior High School students, 14 or 54.2% are female, while 56 or 45.8% are male. This indicates that male respondents slightly outnumber female respondents in the study; however, the distribution remains relatively balanced, ensuring that both groups are adequately represented. The inclusion of gender as a demographic variable is important in educational research, as it helps describe the sample and provides context for interpreting differences in students' engagement and motivation. According to John W. Creswel (2014), demographic characteristics such as gender are essential in research to better understand participants and support meaningful analysis of results.

Table 2: Frequency and distribution of Respondents according to their Academic Strands

Academic Strands	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
ABM	13	6.0	6.0	24.0
STEM	19	38.0	38.0	62.0
HUMSS	16	32.0	32.0	94.0
GAS	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents according to their academic strands. Among the 50 respondents, 19 or 38% are from the STEM strand, followed by 16 or 32.0% from both HUMSS strands, and lastly, 12 or 24% from the GAS strand. This indicates that the respondents are fairly distributed across different strands, with a slightly higher representation from STEMs. The inclusion of students from various academic strands ensures diversity in academic experiences, which is important in understanding differences in engagement and motivation.

Table 3: Frequency and distribution of Respondents according to Senior high School Level

Grade Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Grade 11	36	72.0	72.0	72.0
Grade 12	14	28.0	28.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents according to grade level. Out of 50 respondents, 36 or 72% are from Grade 11, while 14 or 28.0% are from Grade 12. This indicates an equal representation of students from both grade levels, ensuring balanced participation in the study. Including both Grade 11 and Grade 12 students provides a broader perspective on students' engagement and motivation, as they may differ in academic experience and level of maturity.

Problem 2: What is the level of teacher's cultural competence perceived by the senior high school students?

Table 4: level of teacher's cultural competence perceived by the senior high school students

	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. My teacher shows awareness of different cultural backgrounds among students.	1.4200	.60911	Strongly Agree
2. My teacher respects students' beliefs, traditions, and values.	1.2600	.44309	Strongly Agree
3. My teacher avoids making biased or discriminatory remarks	1.3000	.46291	Strongly Agree
4. My teacher treats all students fairly regardless of their cultural background.	1.3000	.46291	Strongly Agree
5. My teacher listens and responds respectfully to students' opinions and perspectives.	1.3400	.47852	Strongly Agree
Average	1.3240	.24542	Strongly Agree

Table 4 presents the level of teachers' cultural competence as perceived by Senior High School students. The overall mean score of 1.3240 indicates that a student strongly agrees of cultural competence among teachers. Among the indicators, "my teacher shows awareness of different cultural backgrounds among students obtained the highest mean of 1.42 interpreted as strongly agree, suggesting that teachers are effective in creating inclusive and respectful learning environments. Meanwhile, "my teacher respects students' belief, tradition and values rated as strongly agree indicating that teachers generally demonstrate understanding, respect, and responsiveness to students' diverse cultural backgrounds. These findings imply that teachers can foster culturally responsive classrooms that support students' learning experiences. According to Geneva Gay (2018), culturally responsive teachers create inclusive environments that recognize and value students' cultural identities, which enhances their overall learning experience

Problem 3: What is the level of student's motivation and engagement

Table 5: The level of student's motivation.

Motivation	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I actively participate in class discussions.	1.1800	.38809	Strongly Agree
2. I complete my assigned tasks and activities on time.	1.4600	.50346	Strongly Agree
3. I pay attention during lessons.	1.1600	.37033	Strongly Agree
4. I follow classroom instructions carefully.	1.2200	.41845	Strongly Agree
5. I enjoy attending my classes.	1.1800	.38809	Strongly Agree
6. I feel interested in the topics being discussed.	1.4000	.49487	Strongly Agree
7. I feel comfortable participating in class.	1.2200	.41845	Strongly Agree
8. I feel connected to my learning environment.	1.2000	.40406	Strongly Agree
9. I try my best to understand difficult lessons	1.4000	.49487	Strongly Agree
10. I put effort into improving my academic performance.	1.2600	.44309	Strongly Agree
Average	1.2680	.14769	Strongly Agree

Table 5 presents the level of students' motivation in Senior High School. The results show an overall mean of 1.2680 which is interpreted as strongly agree. This indicates that students are actively involved in classroom activities, show interest in learning, and exert effort in understanding lessons. Among the

indicators," I complete my assigned task and activities in time" indicating that students make effort to understand lessons and apply learning strategies obtained highest mean of 1.46. This is followed by " i feel interested in the topics having discussed" and "I tried my best to understand difficult lesson" obtained a mean of 1.40 suggesting that students are interested in class discussions, complete tasks, and follow instructions. All indicators are interpreted as strongly agree.

Table 6: The level of student's engagement.

Engagement		Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1.	I ask questions when I do not understand the lesson.	1.2400	.43142	Strongly Agree
2.	I use different strategies to help me learn better.	1.2200	.41845	Strongly Agree
3.	I am motivated to do well in my studies.	1.4000	.35051	Strongly Agree
4.	I complete my schoolwork even when it is difficult.	1.1000	.30305	Strongly Agree
5.	I set goals for my academic performance.	1.1600	.37033	Strongly Agree
6.	I feel encouraged to learn new things.	1.0200	.14142	Strongly Agree
7.	I study even without being told.	1.1000	.30305	Strongly Agree
8.	I believe my education is important for my future.	1.0000	.00000	Strongly Agree
9.	My teacher uses examples and materials that reflect diverse cultures.	1.0800	.27405	Strongly Agree
10.	My teacher encourages students from different backgrounds to participate	1.0000	.00000	Strongly Agree
Average		1.1060	.10382	Strongly Agree

Table 6 presents the level of students' engagement in Senior High School. The results show an overall mean of 1.106 which is interpreted as strongly agree. This indicates that students are generally motivated to learn, show interest in their studies, and are willing to exert effort in accomplishing academic tasks. Among the indicators, " I ask questions when i do not understand the lesson" obtained the highest mean which is 1.24 suggesting that students are strongly driven to achieve academic success and set goals for their learning. This is followed by " i use different strategies to help me learn better" with mean of 1.22, all interpreted as strongly agree.

Problem 4: Is there a significant relationship between the teacher's cultural competence and students' motivation and engagement?

Table 7: Significance of teachers' cultural competence and students' motivation and engagement

Variables		Gender	Academic Strands	Senior High School Level
Teacher's Cultural Competence	Pearson Correlation	1	.029	-.143
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.840	.322
	N	50	50	50
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.029	1	-.120
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.840		.406
	N	50	50	50
Engagement	Pearson Correlation	-.143	-.120	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.322	.406	
	N	50	50	50

Table 7 presents the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation test examining the relationship between teachers' cultural competence and students' engagement and motivation. The findings reveal a significant correlation between teachers' cultural competence and student engagement ($r = 0.029$, $p = 0.840$), indicating that higher levels of cultural competence are associated with increased student engagement in the classroom. Moreover, a strong correlation was found between teachers' cultural competence and student motivation ($r = -.143$, $p = 0.332$), suggesting that students tend to be more motivated when teachers demonstrate culturally competent practices. Since the computed p-values are less than the 0.05 level of significance, the relationships are considered statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that teachers' cultural competence is significantly related to both student engagement and motivation.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhere on strict ethical guidelines for educational research was observed, especially since senior high school students were participating. Throughout the study, the researcher made sure that the welfare, rights, and dignity of every participant were safeguarded. Prior to data collection, each participant gave their informed consent. The study's objectives, methods, possible advantages, and participants' freedom to discontinue participation at any moment without repercussions were all made very obvious to them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers' cultural competency significantly boosts senior high school students' motivation and engagement. Students are more likely to feel appreciated, included, and involved in the learning process

when teachers exhibit an awareness of their cultural backgrounds and incorporate culturally responsive teaching techniques. Higher levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement as well as greater intrinsic drive to engage in academic pursuits are fostered by this sense of belonging. The results confirm that meaningful and pertinent learning experiences are produced by culturally competent teaching, which is crucial in varied classroom environments. When teachings take into account students' identities, experiences, and social realities, they become more engaged learners. As a result, cultural competence is essential to advancing fair and efficient education rather than just being an instructional ability. Also, Strong technological abilities and digital literacy are essential in today's quickly changing educational environment in addition to cultural competency. Digital tool integration improves information availability, promotes teamwork, and supports creative teaching methods in educational settings. Teachers who are both technologically and culturally competent are better able to provide inclusive and captivating digital learning experiences that appeal to a wide range of students. For students to succeed academically in the twenty-first century, they must be able to access, assess, and use information effectively. This is made possible by digital literacy. Students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills greatly increase when they are engaged and motivated by culturally responsive instruction and supported by efficient use of technology. Cultural competence and digital literacy work together to improve overall learning outcomes and get students ready for challenges in the classroom and in the workplace. In order to increase student engagement, motivation, and academic performance, it is crucial to support teachers' cultural competency in addition to their technology skill development. As a result, educational establishments are urged to fund ongoing professional development initiatives that combine digital teaching skills with culturally sensitive pedagogy. By doing this, schools can establish inclusive, cutting-edge, and future-ready learning environments that promote senior high school students' overall development.

Recommendations

To effectively incorporate cultural skills into education and improve student achievements, a number of significant recommendations can be made. First and foremost, our Department of Education Philippines' teacher preparation programs must include comprehensive instruction on cultural responsiveness and inclusivity to guarantee that both aspiring and experienced educators are equipped to understand and engage with the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. This training should include courses on implicit bias and cultural awareness as well as practical strategies for using culturally relevant teaching. This will enable teachers to fully utilize the benefits of cultural competence for their pupils. Schools and districts should then encourage cooperative settings where educators can share best practices and experiences related to cultural competency. Forming partnerships with families, organizations, and healthcare professionals like nurses and psychiatrists can help teachers better understand the cultural backgrounds of their students and increase the relevance of the curriculum. Incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into lesson plans and classroom management strategies should be a top priority for our educational leaders, including the Secretary of the Department of Education Philippines, the Accredited Professional Organization (A.P.O.) for teachers, and legislators who represent teachers and education. This will ensure that every student feels that their identities are respected and reflected in their educational experiences. There should be regular assessments of the effectiveness of culturally sensitive teaching methods in addition to feedback systems for ongoing improvement. Finally, as a researcher, I advise future researchers to investigate areas like regions or provinces where diversity is more attainable. to assess teachers' cultural competency in the classroom. By putting these recommendations into practice, educational institutions may construct more equal and inclusive learning environments that support the academic and personal growth of every student.

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