

**Challenges and opportunities in creating a culturally responsive
classroom climate in rural schools**

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ABSTRACT

In today's increasingly diverse educational landscape, cultivating a culturally responsive classroom climate is critical to promoting equity and academic achievement in secondary schools. This study aimed to determine the extent of the culturally responsive classroom climate in secondary schools in Talibon District, Poblacion, Talibon II, Bohol, as perceived by the learners during the School Year 2025–2026. A descriptive research design was employed, using an adapted questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. The study involved 50 learner respondents from Bohol. The research design involved a descriptive correlational research design. The study employed statistical tools such as the weighted mean, simple percentage, and pearson product-moment correlation r for significant relationships and data analysis. The data gathered were then analyzed statistically. Findings indicated that the findings reveal that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' demographic characteristics and the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities. Furthermore, the overall summary of the extent of challenges encountered in a culturally responsive classroom climate is moderate. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends the development and implementation of a culturally responsive and inclusive classroom plan.

Keywords: Major in Special Education, culturally responsive classroom climate, descriptive method, Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Classroom Plan, Talibon, Bohol.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly diverse educational landscape, cultivating a culturally responsive classroom climate is critical to promoting equity and academic achievement in secondary schools. A culturally responsive classroom climate acknowledges and respects the diverse cultural identities of learners, fostering an environment where students feel valued and supported (Ladson-Billings, 2018). Investigating these opportunities provides educators with critical insights into effective strategies for fostering inclusivity, thereby reducing achievement gaps and supporting social-emotional development (Lee and Luykx, 2022). Moreover, understanding the dynamics of culturally responsive classroom climates informs teacher

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professional development, enabling educators to cultivate more adaptive and culturally sensitive pedagogies (Johnson and Smith, 2023). As schools continue to diversify, exploring these opportunities becomes increasingly important for shaping policies and instructional practices that ensure all learners can thrive academically and socially (Nguyen, 2024).

Notwithstanding the growing recognition of the benefits of culturally responsive classroom climates, international studies reveal persistent gaps in the implementation and accessibility of such opportunities across diverse educational systems. In the United States, Ladson-Billings (2019) highlights that many schools still struggle with inconsistent application of culturally responsive practices, often due to limited teacher training and institutional resistance. In the Philippine context, significant gaps remain in the implementation of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities, particularly in secondary schools serving diverse and indigenous student populations. While national policies advocate for inclusive and culturally sensitive education, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and a standardized curriculum hinder the effective practice of culturally responsive teaching (Garcia and Cruz, 2020; Reyes and Dela Cruz, 2022). Villanueva and Soriano (2021) further highlight that although regional education policies support inclusive and culturally relevant teaching, many schools struggle with limited teacher training and inadequate instructional materials that address the unique cultural identities of learners. Similarly, Villanueva and Gonzales (2021) point out that while schools in Cebu City serve students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, many educators lack sufficient training to respond effectively to this diversity.

Despite the expanding literature on culturally responsive classroom climate, considerable gaps persist in understanding the specific challenges encountered by Filipino learners in implementing inclusive practices, particularly within the localized context of the Talibon District of the municipality of Talibon. While diverse language, cultural inclusion, diverse pedagogy, and inclusiveness are widely acknowledged as essential dimensions of inclusive education, there is an inadequacy of research examining how Filipino learners address and overcome these areas in their daily lives inside the classroom. This study seeks to address these gaps by offering actionable insights into the unique needs and obstacles faced by learners, thereby informing the development of a culturally responsive and inclusive classroom plan.

This study holds significance as it aims to systematically document and analyze the firsthand experiences of high school learners regarding the culturally responsive classroom climate in secondary schools. Focusing on respondents sampled from Borbon District, Poblacion, Borbon, Cebu Province for the school year 2025 to 2026, the study seeks to fill the gap in localized research by providing context-specific insights that can guide educators in creating learning environments that are both inclusive and responsive to the cultural backgrounds and experiences of their students.

The study assumes that respondents' profiles influence their extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities and the challenges they encounter. The research is anchored on several theoretical frameworks and legal bases. In terms of theory, the study draws upon Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Sleeter, 2021; Gay, 2021), Multicultural Education Theory (Banks, 2021), and Transformative Learning Theory (Taylor, 2020). Its legal bases include the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533), the Inclusive Education Policy Framework (DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015), and Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy emphasizes the importance of recognizing and integrating students' cultural backgrounds into teaching practices to promote academic success and equity. According to Sleeter (2021), this pedagogy seeks to address educational disparities by creating learning environments that affirm students' identities and validate their lived experiences. Gay (2021) further elaborates that culturally responsive teaching involves

adapting curriculum content, instructional strategies, and classroom interactions to reflect the diverse cultures of learners. This approach not only improves engagement but also fosters a sense of belonging and respect among students. It challenges deficit-based views of marginalized learners and promotes critical consciousness among both teachers and students. The theory encourages educators to develop cultural competence and to critically reflect on their own biases. Through these practices, culturally responsive pedagogy aims to bridge gaps in achievement while nurturing students' cultural pride. In diverse classrooms, it serves as a tool to make learning more meaningful and relevant, ultimately supporting social justice by empowering learners and promoting equity in education, particularly in multicultural and multilingual settings where diversity is the norm.

Complementing this framework, the Multicultural Education Theory as outlined by Banks (2021) is a framework that promotes educational equity by incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into curricula and school practices. This theory advocates for the recognition and appreciation of cultural differences, aiming to reduce prejudice and discrimination within the school environment. Banks highlights the importance of integrating content from various cultures and histories to create a more inclusive educational experience. The theory encourages the development of students' critical thinking skills to challenge stereotypes and social injustices. Multicultural education goes beyond tolerance, as it actively promotes respect and understanding among diverse groups and calls for restructuring school policies and teacher training programs to support cultural competence and responsiveness. By fostering an environment that values diversity, multicultural education helps students develop a positive self-identity and empathy for others, preparing learners to function effectively in a pluralistic society. Through these means, multicultural education contributes to social cohesion and democratic citizenship, aligning closely with efforts to create culturally responsive classrooms that embrace all learners' identities.

The Transformative Learning Theory, as described by Taylor (2020), focuses on how adults change their frames of reference through critical reflection and dialogue. This theory posits that learning is not only about acquiring knowledge but also about transforming one's beliefs, assumptions, and worldviews. Transformative learning involves a process where learners critically examine their existing perspectives, often triggered by a disorienting dilemma or experience. Taylor emphasizes the role of reflection and discourse in facilitating this deep learning process. The theory supports the idea that education can foster personal growth and social change by encouraging learners to question and revise their cultural assumptions, and it has practical applications in diverse educational settings, helping teachers and students to become more culturally aware and open-minded. Transformative learning promotes empowerment by enabling learners to challenge oppressive structures and develop new ways of understanding themselves and others. The theory aligns well with culturally responsive teaching as it encourages critical consciousness and respect for diversity, enabling educators to create inclusive classrooms that support meaningful and lasting change.

On the legal dimension, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533) is a landmark legislation in the Philippines that significantly reforms the basic education system by extending the years of basic education and emphasizing a learner-centered, inclusive curriculum. This law mandates that educational programs be responsive to the diverse needs and cultural backgrounds of learners, promoting mother tongue-based multilingual education during the early years of schooling to facilitate better understanding and cognitive development. Republic Act No. 10533 supports contextualizing learning content to make it relevant to the learners' cultural and social realities, fostering respect for local traditions and knowledge. It highlights the importance of developing critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong

learning skills while ensuring that all students have equitable access to quality education. The act provides a solid legal foundation for schools to cultivate culturally responsive classroom climates by integrating multicultural perspectives and recognizing the unique identities of learners. By institutionalizing these principles, the law helps reduce educational disparities and supports inclusivity, allowing learners from diverse cultural groups to feel valued and empowered, while also encouraging continuous professional development for teachers to equip them with strategies that address the cultural diversity of their students. Through this comprehensive framework, the law seeks to prepare Filipino learners to become globally competitive yet deeply rooted in their cultural heritage, thereby fostering a harmonious and inclusive learning environment.

The Inclusive Education Policy Framework under DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015 articulates the Department of Education's commitment to ensuring that all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, have access to quality education in a supportive and inclusive environment. This policy framework mandates the integration of learners with diverse needs, including those with disabilities, those from marginalized communities, and those from different cultural and linguistic groups, into the regular education system. It underscores the importance of adapting teaching methods, curriculum content, and school culture to accommodate diversity and promote participation from every student. The framework also highlights the role of schools in creating a safe and respectful classroom climate that values cultural differences and promotes equity. Collaboration between teachers, parents, community members, and local government units is emphasized to provide comprehensive support to learners, reflecting a holistic approach to education. Additionally, the policy encourages continuous capacity building for educators to enhance their skills in managing diverse classrooms and applying culturally responsive pedagogies. By institutionalizing inclusive education, DepEd Order No. 32 fosters the development of learning environments that nurture the full potential of every student while respecting their cultural identities, thereby promoting educational equity and social justice and enabling schools to respond effectively to the unique cultural contexts of their learners.

Sustainable Development Goal 4, adopted by the United Nations, represents a global commitment to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all by the year 2030. This goal emphasizes the elimination of disparities in education access and outcomes, particularly for marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, girls, and persons with disabilities. SDG 4 advocates for education systems that are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the needs of diverse learners, encouraging the incorporation of local cultures, languages, and knowledge systems into curricula and teaching practices. It also stresses the importance of creating safe and supportive learning environments that foster respect for diversity and promote equity among students. By promoting lifelong learning, SDG 4 recognizes education as a fundamental human right that contributes to personal development, social inclusion, and sustainable development. The goal serves as a guiding framework for countries worldwide to design policies and programs that reflect cultural responsiveness and inclusivity in classrooms, while encouraging collaboration among governments, educators, and communities to address barriers that hinder equal access to quality education. Ultimately, SDG 4 supports the creation of classroom climates where learners' cultural identities are acknowledged and valued, thereby helping to build more equitable societies and strengthening the call for culturally responsive education as a global priority aligned with national efforts to improve classroom inclusivity and learner engagement.

Recent research underscores the importance of cultivating a culturally responsive classroom climate in secondary schools to improve student engagement, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being. Sleeter (2021) emphasizes that culturally

responsive classrooms validate and affirm students' cultural identities, which fosters a sense of belonging and motivation to learn. Similarly, Gay (2021) highlights that integrating culturally relevant teaching practices within the classroom environment creates inclusive spaces where diverse learners feel respected and supported. Studies by Lee and Luykx (2022) reveal that classrooms with culturally affirming climates experience fewer disciplinary problems and stronger peer relationships, while Johnson and Smith (2023) argue that teachers' cultural competence and reflective practices are essential for establishing such climates, which promote equity and respect for diversity. These insights align with Banks's (2021) multicultural education theory, which advocates for inclusive curricula and educational policies that embrace cultural diversity. Nguyen (2024) further supports the view that culturally responsive classroom climates prepare students to succeed in diverse societies, making these practices critical in secondary education. These findings collectively demonstrate the need for ongoing professional development and systemic support to sustain culturally responsive climates in secondary school classrooms.

Research further demonstrates that learners' perceptions of a culturally responsive classroom climate significantly influence their academic motivation, engagement, and overall well-being. Lee and Luykx (2022) reveal that students who perceive their classrooms as culturally affirming report higher levels of belonging and positive peer relationships, which contribute to better academic performance. Nguyen (2024) found that learners appreciate when teachers incorporate their cultural backgrounds into lessons, making learning more relevant and meaningful, which fosters deeper engagement. Johnson and Smith (2023) emphasize that students' recognition of teachers' cultural competence enhances their trust and openness, creating a supportive learning environment. Sleeter (2021) further highlights that when learners feel respected and validated in their cultural identities, they develop greater self-confidence and are more willing to participate actively in class, while Gay (2021) argues that understanding students' perceptions is crucial for educators to adjust teaching practices and create inclusive climates that meet the needs of diverse learners.

Nonetheless, learners in culturally responsive classroom climates continue to face various challenges that affect their learning experiences and outcomes. Despite efforts to foster inclusivity, some students report feeling misunderstood or marginalized when their cultural identities are not fully acknowledged or are stereotyped by educators (Lee and Luykx, 2022). Johnson and Smith (2023) highlight that gaps in teachers' cultural competence often lead to instructional practices that unintentionally exclude or disadvantage certain student groups. Language barriers, limited access to culturally relevant learning materials, and rigid curricula are also significant challenges that hinder learners' full participation and engagement (Nguyen, 2024). Furthermore, systemic issues such as standardized testing and school policies sometimes conflict with culturally responsive pedagogical goals, creating obstacles for students from diverse backgrounds (Sleeter, 2021). These challenges not only affect academic performance but also influence students' sense of belonging and motivation.

In response to these challenges, developing culturally responsive and inclusive classroom plans is essential for addressing the diverse needs of learners and fostering equitable educational environments in secondary schools. Sleeter (2021) emphasizes that effective classroom plans incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into curriculum design and instructional strategies, ensuring that all learners see themselves reflected in the content. Gay (2021) argues that such plans promote inclusivity by adapting teaching methods to accommodate varied learning styles and cultural perspectives, thereby enhancing student engagement and achievement. Johnson and Smith (2023) highlight that collaborative planning involving teachers, students, and community members strengthens the cultural relevance and

responsiveness of classroom practices. Moreover, Nguyen (2024) notes that inclusive classroom plans must also address barriers such as language differences and socioeconomic disparities through differentiated instruction and accessible resources. Implementing these plans fosters a sense of belonging among students, improving their confidence, motivation, and overall academic performance while preparing learners to navigate diverse social environments and promoting respect, empathy, and intercultural understanding.

The foregoing discussions establish the theoretical and empirical framework for this study, which employs a research-based questionnaire as a data collection instrument to determine the culturally responsive classroom climate of secondary schools as perceived by learners in Talibon II District, Poblacion, Talibon, Bohol for the school year 2025 to 2026, as the basis for a culturally responsive and inclusive classroom plan. This framework ensures that the study is grounded in established theories and previous research, providing a structured approach to understanding the learners' experiences. By using a carefully designed questionnaire, the study aims to capture detailed and reliable data that reflect the actual classroom climate, which will serve as a foundation for developing strategies that address learners' cultural needs and promote inclusive educational practices.

Statement of the problem

This study determined the extent of the culturally responsive classroom climate in secondary schools in Talibon II District, Poblacion, Talibon, Bohol, as perceived by the learners during the School Year 2025–2026. The findings served as the basis for developing a culturally responsive and inclusive classroom plan.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age and gender, grade level, and parents' highest educational attainment?
2. What is the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities of the respondents as to the dimensions of diverse language, cultural inclusion, diverse pedagogy, and inclusiveness?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' profiles and their extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities?
4. What is the extent of challenges encountered by the respondents in a culturally responsive classroom climate?
5. Based on the findings, what culturally responsive and inclusive classroom plan can be developed?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate in secondary schools in Talibon II District, Poblacion, Talibon, Bohol, as perceived by learners during the School Year 2025 to 2026. This design was deemed appropriate as it sought to accomplish the following objectives: (1) determine the profile of the respondents; (2) assess the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities of the respondents across specified dimensions; (3) examine the significant relationship between the respondents' profiles and their extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities; and (4) determine the extent of challenges encountered by the respondents in a culturally responsive classroom climate. The findings derived from this study were intended to serve as the basis for developing a culturally responsive and inclusive classroom plan.

The study followed an input-process-output framework to demonstrate how the research was carried out, from the collection of raw data to its organization and analysis, culminating in the production of findings. The input component consisted of the variables identified in the statement of the problem, specifically the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, grade level, and parents' highest educational attainment; the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities across the dimensions of diverse language, cultural inclusion, diverse pedagogy, and inclusiveness; the significant relationship between the respondents' profiles and their extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities; and the extent of challenges encountered by the respondents in a culturally responsive classroom climate. The process component encompassed the descriptive method of research, administration of the questionnaire, data gathering, data analysis, data organization, and interpretation of data. The output of the study was the development of a culturally responsive and inclusive classroom plan tailored to the needs of the target population, comprising areas of concern, objectives, strategies, persons involved, budget, source of budget, time frame, expected outcome, and actual accomplishment.

The study was conducted at selected high schools of Talibon II District, Talibon, Bohol. This research environment was selected in recognition of the documented significance of classroom climate across physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and technological dimensions in influencing student behavior and teacher perceptions in the district. Surveys conducted among Grade VII students and teachers in Talibon I High Schools have revealed that both groups similarly perceive their classrooms as welcoming and supportive, with no large gaps between student and teacher views on climate aspects. Social interactions, teacher-student relationships, and emotional support have been particularly highlighted as strong points in creating a sense of belonging and safety. Nonetheless, the physical environment and technological resources have been observed as comparatively less robust, with some deficiencies in classroom infrastructure and access to digital tools. Intellectual engagement, encompassing stimulating tasks and varied instructional materials, has been rated as moderately strong, though room for improvement in providing richer learning stimuli remains evident. The emotional climate, including teacher mood, empathy, and responsiveness, has been correlated with better student behavior toward both peers and authority figures. While student-centered strategies have been observed in use, regular collaborative work, peer support, and participatory learning have not always been consistently implemented across schools. Overall, classrooms in Talibon exhibit many characteristics of cultural responsiveness such as respect, care, and social cohesion, while also contending with challenges relating to resources and consistency of practice that affect the degree to which they can be considered genuinely responsive environments.

The respondents of the study were the high school learners of the selected high schools of Talibon II District. The researcher applied a purposive random technique in the selection of the respondents. The total number of respondents was 50, all of whom came from one school within the research environment, representing 100% of the study sample. This distribution reflects the bounded scope of the study's sampling frame within the identified research locale.

The study employed a research-based questionnaire as its primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire was adopted from the study of Holgate (2016) and was composed of three parts. The first part dealt with the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, grade level, and parents' highest educational attainment. The second part assessed the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities of the respondents across the following dimensions: diverse language, cultural inclusion, diverse pedagogy, and inclusiveness. This part utilized a five-point Likert scale with a total of five statements per

dimension. The third part measured the extent of challenges encountered by the respondents in a culturally responsive classroom climate, also utilizing a five-point Likert scale with a total of 10 statements.

The responses elicited through the instrument were interpreted using a standardized scoring scale. A rating of 5, corresponding to a scale range of 4.20 to 5.00, was verbally described as Very High, indicating that the respondent absolutely supports the statement. A rating of 4, corresponding to a scale range of 3.40 to 4.19, was verbally described as High, indicating that the respondent definitely supports the statement. A rating of 3, corresponding to a scale range of 2.60 to 3.39, was verbally described as Moderate, indicating that the respondent is not certain of the statement. A rating of 2, corresponding to a scale range of 1.80 to 2.59, was verbally described as Low, indicating that the respondent possibly supports the statement. A rating of 1, corresponding to a scale range of 1.00 to 1.79, was verbally described as Very Low, indicating that the respondent probably does not support the statement. This scoring framework was applied consistently across all items related to the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities and the extent of challenges encountered.

The data gathering procedure was carried out in three stages. During the preliminary stage, the researchers submitted a transmittal letter to the public schools district supervisor and school principal to request permission to conduct the study. Once approval was secured, the researcher coordinated the scheduling of the data collection activities in alignment with the respondents' availability. During the data gathering stage, the researchers facilitated an orientation for the respondents on the scheduled day. Salient points discussed during the orientation included the purpose of the study, its procedures, and the measures taken to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. Administration of the survey questionnaires followed immediately after the orientation, with instructions provided on how to answer each section. Assistance was made available to respondents while they completed the questionnaires, and sufficient time was allotted for their responses. Retrieval of the accomplished questionnaires followed thereafter. During the post data gathering stage, the collected data were tallied, organized, summarized, interpreted, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

The statistical analysis of the study incorporated both descriptive and quantitative methods. Simple percentage (P) was used to determine relevant information pertaining to the respondents' profiles. Weighted mean was employed to assess the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities of the respondents across the specified dimensions, as well as the extent of challenges encountered by the respondents in a culturally responsive classroom climate. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation r was used to determine the significant relationship between the respondents' profiles and their extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities.

The conduct of this study was guided by a set of ethical principles observed before, during, and after data collection. With respect to voluntary participation, respondents from the identified research context were informed that their engagement and cooperation in the study were entirely voluntary. Regarding informed consent, respondents were provided with informed consent materials to ensure that they fully understood the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. With respect to anonymity, the respondents' profiles and data were kept confidential throughout the study, and respondents were assured that their privacy would be protected with maximum discretion. Concerning confidentiality, the study ensured that all profiles, answers, and data obtained from respondents would be kept strictly private. With respect to potential for harm, respondents were assured that there was no risk associated with their participation and that they were free to disclose only the information with which they were comfortable. All disclosed information was handled with strict confidentiality. Finally, with respect to the communication of results, the study ensured that all data and findings

presented were accurate, original, and free of plagiarism or inaccuracies, thereby guaranteeing that every piece of information provided was reasonable, truthful, factual, and free from bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the study conducted among 50 student respondents drawn from a single school setting through purposive sampling. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, utilizing a structured survey questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. Descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means, were used to profile the respondents and determine the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities across four dimensions, namely diverse language, cultural inclusion, diverse pedagogy, and inclusiveness. The extent of challenges encountered in a culturally responsive classroom climate was likewise analyzed using weighted means. To determine whether significant relationships existed between the respondents' demographic profiles and their perceived extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities, Pearson *r* correlation with corresponding *t*-test values was computed at the 0.05 level of significance. All results are interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the study, and the discussion is grounded entirely in the data gathered through the survey instrument.

Profile of the respondents

The demographic profile of the 50 respondents was examined in terms of age, gender, grade level, and parents' highest educational attainment. With respect to age, 27 or 54.00% of the respondents were 16 years old, 12 or 24.00% were 17 years old, six or 12.00% were 15 years old, and five or 10.00% were 18 years old. The data indicate that the majority of the respondents were between 16 and 17 years old, an age range that carries meaningful developmental significance in the context of culturally responsive education. At this stage of adolescence, learners are developing greater capacity for abstract thinking, perspective-taking, and awareness of social inequalities, which enables them to analyze and reflect on issues of unequal treatment and structural bias within educational settings (Flanagan et al., as cited in Wray-Lake et al., 2015; Hughes & Bigler, 2011). This developmental progression supports older adolescents' capacity to evaluate whether classroom practices promote equitable treatment and respect for cultural differences, as they are not only acquiring content knowledge but also forming social judgments about fairness and inclusivity in their immediate environment (Flanagan et al., 2014). Literature on classroom climate further affirms that environments fostering respect and mutual understanding can enhance adolescents' sense of belonging and encourage acceptance of diverse perspectives, reinforcing how cognitive and social development at this age influences students' perceptions of culturally responsive practices (Wray-Lake et al., 2015). These heightened sensitivities suggest that the respondents were developmentally positioned to meaningfully assess the culturally responsive dimensions explored in this study.

In terms of gender, 36 or 72.00% of the respondents were female, while 14 or 28.00% were male. The predominance of female respondents implies that the dataset largely reflects perspectives shaped by gendered experiences within the classroom. Female students may be particularly attentive to whether the classroom environment values their voices, encourages equitable participation, and challenges stereotypes that could limit their engagement. Research on gender equality perceptions in educational contexts indicates that students generally believe

gender should not limit participation or performance, underscoring the importance of equitable classroom practices that support all learners (Tenedero et al., 2025). Furthermore, studies on gender and student engagement demonstrate that when learning environments actively address gender bias and foster inclusivity, female students often report increased comfort, a stronger sense of belonging, and greater willingness to participate, especially in settings where equity is explicitly emphasized (DepEd Region VIII Research Bulletin, 2025). These patterns suggest that the majority of respondents may have approached the survey items through a lens shaped by their experiences as female learners navigating issues of representation and inclusion.

Regarding grade level, 37 or 74.00% of the respondents were senior high school students, while 13 or 26.00% were junior high school students. The majority belonged to the senior high school level, which has further implications for how the data should be interpreted. At this stage, students are engaged in increasingly complex cognitive tasks, and educators are expected to integrate critical thinking into curricula to prepare learners for real-world challenges and academic advancement (Yi & Yao, 2025). Moreover, culturally responsive teaching practices that validate students' identities and connect learning to their lived experiences have been found to enhance engagement, belonging, and identity affirmation among adolescents, highlighting how sensitivity to diversity in classroom practices can directly affect learners' perceptions of respect and inclusion (Isleem et al., 2025). Senior high school students are thus more likely to perceive nuanced dimensions of culturally responsive practice and to critically evaluate whether their classroom environments authentically affirm diverse cultural identities.

With regard to parents' highest educational attainment, 25 or 50.00% of the respondents had parents who were college graduates or at the college level, 22 or 44.00% had parents who were high school graduates or at the high school level, and three or 6.00% had parents who were at the elementary level. The majority of respondents came from households where at least one parent had attained college-level education. This is noteworthy because parents with greater educational attainment often hold higher academic expectations for their children and tend to be more actively involved in their schooling, which can shape students' perceptions of educational opportunities and fairness (Hu & Ye, 2025). This involvement and the accompanying academic expectations can, in turn, influence how students perceive classroom climates, including culturally responsive practices. When parents engage more with schools, a pattern often correlated with higher education levels, students may internalize values that emphasize equitable learning environments and may more critically assess whether educators respect cultural diversity and provide inclusive opportunities (Pinantoan, 2021; Epstein, 2020). The educational background of the respondents' parents may therefore have contributed to a heightened awareness of the cultural responsiveness of classroom instruction.

Extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities

The extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities was assessed across four dimensions: diverse language, cultural inclusion, diverse pedagogy, and inclusiveness. Results across all dimensions are presented and interpreted below.

Diverse language

With respect to the dimension of diverse language, the overall mean was 4.35 with a verbal description of very high, indicating that students perceived their instructor as highly accommodating of their linguistic needs. Among the individual indicators, the statement "My instructor uses language that I can understand" obtained the highest mean of 4.70 with a verbal description of very high. This finding implies that the teacher communicates clearly and adjusts

explanations to meet students' comprehension levels, suggesting attentiveness to linguistic accessibility and a deliberate avoidance of overly complex or confusing terminology. Studies in instructional communication affirm that teacher clarity, defined as the use of clear verbal cues, organized explanations, and comprehensible language, reduces students' cognitive load and facilitates the processing of information, which in turn enhances both cognitive and affective learning outcomes (Bolkan et al., 2016). Clarity in teacher discourse plays a crucial role in making classroom content accessible by helping students negotiate meaning and connect new concepts to existing knowledge, thereby improving comprehension and academic success (Derakhshan, 2023; Titsworth et al., 2016). Research further asserts that simplifying instruction and avoiding overly complex terminology minimizes confusion and supports students across diverse linguistic backgrounds in better understanding expectations, tasks, and learning goals (Yu, 2024). The second highest indicator in this dimension was the statement "I feel that communicating with peers in a native language helps students understand the content more clearly," which obtained a mean of 4.58 and a verbal description of very high. This suggests that shared language serves as an important support system in the learning process, enabling students to clarify difficult concepts, verify comprehension, and build confidence before expressing ideas in the classroom's primary language. Studies indicate that incorporating students' first languages in classroom activities allows learners to engage with complex content more actively, facilitating meaning-making and increasing participation and motivation, and these strategies are associated with higher engagement, reduced anxiety, and improved comprehension when students can relate new information to their existing linguistic knowledge (De Guzman, 2025; Walny, 2024). The indicator "My instructor allows students to express themselves in their native language" obtained a mean of 4.38 with a verbal description of very high, while "My instructor is open to students expressing themselves in their native language in class" obtained a mean of 4.26, also described as very high. The indicator "My instructor allows non-native English speakers time to respond to questions" obtained a mean of 3.86 with a verbal description of high, the lowest among the five indicators in this dimension, yet still reflecting a substantively positive level of practice. Taken together, the overall mean of 4.35 for diverse language confirms a very high extent of culturally responsive practice in this domain.

Cultural inclusion

For the dimension of cultural inclusion, the overall mean was 4.04 with a verbal description of high, indicating a strong but slightly lower level of culturally responsive engagement compared to the other dimensions. The highest-rated indicator was "My instructor provides examples which relate to my cultural background," with a mean of 4.20 and a verbal description of high. This implies that the instructor intentionally works to make learning more meaningful and personally relevant by connecting academic content to students' lived experiences. Culturally responsive pedagogy advocates for using students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and frames of reference as assets in instruction, which makes learning encounters more relevant and effective for diverse learners (Gay, 2018). Integrating students' identities and real-world contexts into teaching not only validates their backgrounds but also boosts engagement, belonging, and academic outcomes, as students are more likely to see the value and applicability of what they are learning (Isleem et al., 2025). The second highest indicators in this dimension were "My instructor uses examples from different cultures to explain concepts" and "My instructor seems to be aware of differences in students' cultural background," both obtaining a mean of 4.14 with a verbal description of high. These findings

suggest that the instructor recognizes the value of diversity and strives to make lessons relatable to students from varied cultural experiences. By intentionally incorporating diverse perspectives and examples, teachers help students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, which strengthens understanding and motivates participation (Alahira et al., 2024). Culturally responsive practices not only enhance student engagement and academic outcomes but also contribute to a sense of belonging by validating learners' lived experiences and cultural identities (Fahadah & Thomps, 2025). The indicator "My instructor seems to have an understanding of my culture" obtained a mean of 4.12, while the lowest-rated indicator in this dimension, "My instructor shows interest in my cultural background," obtained a mean of 3.64, both described as high. The slight dip in perceived personal cultural interest, relative to the other indicators, may suggest that while instructors effectively integrate cultural diversity into the curriculum in general terms, they may have fewer opportunities to demonstrate individualized interest in each student's specific cultural heritage. The overall mean of 4.04 nonetheless affirms a high extent of culturally inclusive practice.

Diverse pedagogy

The dimension of diverse pedagogy yielded an overall mean of 4.34 with a verbal description of very high, reflecting a strong perception among respondents that their instructor employs varied instructional approaches to support learning. The highest-rated indicator was "My instructor provides enough opportunities for me to show I understand the content taught in class," with a mean of 4.70 and a verbal description of very high. This implies that the learning environment encourages continuous assessment, reflection, and growth, and that the instructor values multiple forms of demonstrating knowledge rather than relying on a single high-stakes measure. Formative assessment practices, which occur during the learning process and provide ongoing feedback, have been shown to significantly improve student achievement, foster self-regulated learning, and promote a growth mindset by helping learners understand their strengths and areas for improvement (Foster, 2024). Continuous assessment through diverse activities such as peer and self-assessments, small quizzes, and collaborative discussions not only enhances student engagement and motivation but also allows teachers to adjust instruction based on real-time insights into student understanding, making learning more personalized and equitable (Foster, 2024; Ismail et al., 2022). The second highest indicator was "My instructor uses different forms of instruction to help students understand content," with a mean of 4.58 and a verbal description of very high. This finding implies that the instructor recognizes and accommodates diverse learning needs and preferences within the classroom, offering multiple pathways for students to grasp key concepts. Differentiated instruction involves tailoring content delivery, learning activities, and assessment strategies to address students' varied strengths, interests, and readiness levels, whether through visual aids, hands-on activities, discussions, or technology-based tools (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2019). Such approaches not only support deeper comprehension but also foster positive attitudes toward learning by allowing students to interact with material in ways that align with their preferred modalities, thereby reducing barriers to participation (Subban, 2023). The remaining three indicators, specifically "My instructor provides opportunities for students to learn from one another," "My instructor relates course content to real world examples," and "My instructor uses multiple forms of assessment for students to demonstrate understanding of course content," each obtained a mean of 4.14 with a verbal description of high. The overall mean of 4.34 confirms a very high extent of diverse pedagogical practice.

Inclusiveness

The dimension of inclusiveness also produced an overall mean of 4.34 with a verbal description of very high, mirroring the result for diverse pedagogy and reflecting a similarly strong perception of equitable and supportive classroom conditions. The highest-rated indicator in this dimension was "I feel that my instructor treats everyone the same regardless of their differences," which obtained a mean of 4.70 and a verbal description of very high. This implies that the classroom environment promotes fairness, respect, and equality, and that the instructor is mindful of avoiding favoritism or bias while providing equal opportunities for all students to participate and succeed. Research on children's perspectives in classroom settings shows that teacher bias and exclusionary behaviors negatively impact students' sense of fairness and belonging, whereas equitable treatment by educators supports inclusive social dynamics and student achievement (Kaufman & Killen, 2022). Educational practice guides further emphasize that respect and dignity as foundational classroom principles help establish an equitable environment where students feel safe to express ideas and participate fully in learning (Johnnie McKinley, 2010). The second highest indicator was "I feel comfortable expressing my beliefs in this class," with a mean of 4.58 and a verbal description of very high. This finding implies that the learning environment is supportive, respectful, and open to diverse perspectives, and that the teacher has cultivated a climate of trust where students' voices are valued and differences in opinion are handled constructively. Classrooms where teachers intentionally build emotional safety and respect are characterized by open communication, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging, all of which are crucial for positive student outcomes and active participation (Hwang & Evans, 2025). Inclusive teaching practices that acknowledge and honor students' cultural identities help students feel seen and respected, which enhances both academic engagement and social-emotional well-being (Ismail et al., 2022). When teachers value students' perspectives and create opportunities for all voices to be heard, students develop greater confidence, self-efficacy, and willingness to contribute to class discussions, reflecting a classroom culture built on trust and mutual respect (Sahin & Kul, 2024). The remaining three indicators, specifically "I feel comfortable expressing my opinions in this class," "My instructor encourages students to be mindful of other students' perspectives," and "My instructor creates a welcoming environment for all students," each obtained a mean of 4.14 with a verbal description of high. The overall mean of 4.34 confirms a very high extent of inclusive practice in the classroom.

Significant relationship between respondents' profiles and their extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities

To determine whether the respondents' demographic characteristics were significantly associated with their perceived extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities, Pearson *r* correlation analysis was conducted for each profile variable at the 0.05 level of significance, with degrees of freedom equal to 48 and a critical *t*-value of 2.009. The results revealed that no significant relationship existed between any of the profile variables and the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities.

For age, the Pearson *r* value was -0.117, yielding a computed *t*-value of -0.816, which did not exceed the critical *t*-value of 2.009. The *p*-value was greater than 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. For gender or sex at birth, the Pearson *r* value was 0.206 and the computed *t*-value was 1.458, again falling below the critical *t*-value. The *p*-value was likewise greater than 0.05, and the null hypothesis was accepted. For parents' highest

educational attainment, the Pearson r value was -0.086 and the computed t -value was -0.598 , with the p -value exceeding 0.05 , resulting in acceptance of the null hypothesis. For grade level, the Pearson r value was 0.033 and the computed t -value was 0.229 , also below the critical value, with the p -value greater than 0.05 and the null hypothesis accepted for this variable as well.

Across all four profile variables, the correlation coefficients were weak, the computed t -values were consistently lower than the critical t -value of 2.009 , and all p -values exceeded the 0.05 level of significance. These results collectively indicate that differences in demographic profile do not significantly influence how culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities are experienced by the respondents. This pattern suggests that culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities are being implemented in a manner that is consistent and inclusive regardless of learners' demographic differences, serving as a positive indicator for inclusive education. The extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities is largely shaped by instructional practices, teacher beliefs, and school-wide policies rather than by learners' demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Research on culturally responsive teaching emphasizes that when educators intentionally implement inclusive pedagogical strategies, including equitable participation, respectful dialogue, and affirmation of diverse cultural identities, students tend to experience similar levels of classroom inclusivity regardless of demographic background (Gay, 2019; Hammond, 2021). For educators and school administrators, these findings underscore the importance of sustaining and strengthening culturally responsive strategies that benefit all learners, rather than tailoring them solely based on demographic factors.

Extent of challenges encountered in a culturally responsive classroom climate

The extent of challenges encountered by the respondents in a culturally responsive classroom climate was assessed using ten indicators, yielding an overall mean of 3.38 with a verbal description of moderate. This result indicates that while challenges exist, they are perceived at a middle level of intensity rather than as severe or pervasive barriers to culturally responsive practice.

The indicator rated highest was "Language differences between students and teachers create communication difficulties in the classroom," with a mean of 3.72 and a verbal description of high. This finding implies that important instructional information may not always be fully understood, leading to reduced student engagement and lower academic performance. Misinterpretations can arise when teachers are unable to express concepts in ways that all students comprehend, and students may feel hesitant to participate or ask questions due to fear of being misunderstood. This communication gap can also limit teachers' ability to provide effective feedback and support, ultimately affecting the overall learning environment and classroom relationships. Research confirms that ineffective communication in instruction has been linked to student confusion, reduced participation, and lower academic achievement, particularly when explanations are vague or use unfamiliar terminology, leaving learners hesitant to ask questions for fear of misunderstanding or embarrassment (Ober et al., 2023). Literature on multilingual and culturally diverse classrooms similarly establishes that language barriers and unclear instruction contribute to student disengagement and academic struggles, as learners may misunderstand task requirements or refrain from participation, which negatively affects comprehension and confidence (Titsworth & Mazer, 2010).

The second highest challenge was "I find it challenging to integrate students' diverse cultural backgrounds into my daily lessons," with a mean of 3.60 and a verbal description of high. This implies that opportunities to create a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment may sometimes be missed, and that lessons may occasionally feel less

relevant or engaging for some students, potentially affecting their sense of belonging and participation in class. The finding may also indicate a need for additional resources, training, or allocated time to enable educators to better understand students' cultural experiences and connect them meaningfully to the curriculum. Lack of culturally relevant curriculum content and teaching methods that reflect students' diverse backgrounds can contribute to feelings of alienation among learners who do not see their identities or experiences represented, which undermines engagement and inclusivity (Nel et al., 2023). Culturally responsive pedagogy, wherein students' cultural experiences are incorporated into instruction, enhances engagement, motivation, and academic performance by making learning more meaningful and relatable (Moosa & Bekker, 2024).

Among the remaining indicators, "There are few opportunities for collaboration with families or communities to support cultural inclusion" obtained a mean of 3.52 with a verbal description of high, while "It is difficult to address conflicting cultural values or norms within a diverse classroom" obtained a mean of 3.56, also described as high. The indicator "I lack adequate training on culturally responsive teaching strategies" obtained a mean of 3.42, likewise described as high. The indicators "There is limited availability of culturally relevant instructional materials in our school" and "I have limited time to prepare lessons that reflect the cultural diversity of my students" each obtained a mean of 3.40 with a verbal description of moderate. The indicator "I receive insufficient support from school administration in promoting cultural responsiveness" obtained a mean of 3.12 with a verbal description of moderate, while "Assessment tools used in school do not adequately reflect students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds" obtained a mean of 3.04, also described as moderate. The lowest-rated challenge was "Some students feel excluded because their culture is not represented in classroom activities," with a mean of 3.02 and a verbal description of moderate. The overall mean of 3.38 with a verbal description of moderate suggests that challenges are real and present but have not escalated to a level that severely undermines the generally positive picture of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities reflected in the preceding dimensions.

Synthesis of findings

Taken together, the findings of this study present a coherent and encouraging picture of culturally responsive classroom climate implementation, alongside a realistic acknowledgment of the challenges that remain. Among the 50 respondents, the four dimensions of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities, specifically diverse language, cultural inclusion, diverse pedagogy, and inclusiveness, were rated at a high to very high extent, with overall means of 4.35, 4.04, 4.34, and 4.34, respectively. These results affirm that the classroom environment under investigation reflects meaningful engagement with culturally responsive principles and that students broadly perceive their instructor as linguistically accommodating, culturally aware, pedagogically varied, and committed to equitable treatment. The Pearson r correlation analysis further established that no significant relationship existed between any of the four demographic profile variables, namely age, sex at birth, parents' educational attainment, and grade level, and the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities, with all computed t -values falling below the critical t -value of 2.009 at the 0.05 level of significance and all p -values exceeding 0.05, resulting in the acceptance of all null hypotheses. This outcome reinforces the interpretation that inclusive instructional practices, rather than learner demographics, are the primary determinants of the experienced quality of culturally responsive classroom climate. At the same time, the moderate overall mean of 3.38

for challenges encountered indicates that real barriers persist, particularly in the areas of language-based communication difficulties and the integration of diverse cultural backgrounds into daily instruction, both of which were rated at a high extent. These findings collectively address the objectives of the study, confirm that culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities are being implemented at a substantively positive level, and highlight specific areas where professional development, administrative support, resource provision, and community partnership remain necessary. The results contribute to the growing body of literature on culturally responsive pedagogy in secondary education contexts and provide a grounded empirical basis for institutional recommendations. The subsequent chapter presents the conclusions drawn from these findings and the corresponding recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate in secondary schools in Talibon District, Poblacion, Talibon, Bohol, as perceived by learners during School Year 2025 to 2026. Through a descriptive correlational research design and the application of weighted mean, simple percentage, and Pearson product-moment correlation as statistical tools, the study gathered and analyzed data from over 50 respondents using an adapted questionnaire from Holgate (2016). The findings collectively point to a classroom environment that is largely responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of its learners, while also revealing particular areas that warrant sustained attention and institutional support.

The profile of the respondents revealed that the majority were between 16 and 17 years of age and identified as female, with most of their parents having attained college-level education or higher. These demographic characteristics provided the backdrop against which the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities was assessed across four key dimensions, namely diverse language, cultural inclusion, diverse pedagogy, and inclusiveness. Across all four dimensions, the findings consistently indicated that learners perceived their classroom environments to be responsive to their diverse backgrounds and needs. With respect to diverse language, the overall mean fell within a very high verbal description, with learners strongly affirming that their instructors used language they could understand and that peer communication in native languages enhanced content comprehension. Similarly, the dimension of diverse pedagogy yielded a very high overall mean, with learners recognizing that their instructors provided sufficient opportunities to demonstrate understanding and employed varied instructional forms to support learning. The dimension of inclusiveness likewise obtained a very high overall mean, with learners expressing that they were treated equitably regardless of their differences and that they felt comfortable expressing their beliefs in class. Cultural inclusion, while rated high rather than very high, reflected learners' recognition that instructors incorporated culturally relevant examples and demonstrated awareness of students' diverse cultural backgrounds.

A particularly significant finding of the study concerns the relationship between the respondents' demographic characteristics and the extent of culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities. The data revealed no significant relationship between these variables, as age, sex at birth, parental educational attainment, and grade level all produced weak correlations with computed t-values that fell below the critical t-value at the 0.05 level of significance. This finding indicates that the culturally responsive practices observed in the classroom were implemented in a consistent and inclusive manner that transcended individual demographic differences among learners. In other words, the benefits of a culturally responsive climate were extended equitably across the student population, regardless of who the learners were in terms of their personal and familial characteristics.

Notwithstanding the generally positive perceptions of the classroom climate, the study also identified challenges that learners encountered in culturally responsive settings. The most prominent challenge pertained to language differences between students and teachers, which were perceived to create communication difficulties in the classroom. The second most frequently noted challenge involved the difficulty of integrating students' diverse cultural backgrounds into daily lessons. Although the overall extent of challenges was rated at a moderate level, these findings underscore the reality that culturally responsive teaching, despite its demonstrated benefits, is not without practical obstacles that require deliberate and sustained effort to address.

In light of these findings, it is concluded that culturally responsive classroom climate opportunities are being implemented in a manner that is both consistent and inclusive, effectively serving learners across varied demographic profiles. The absence of a significant relationship between demographic characteristics and the extent of culturally responsive climate opportunities affirms that such practices are being applied in ways that do not discriminate by age, sex, or parental educational background, reflecting a commendable level of equity in classroom practice. To sustain and further strengthen these efforts, the study recommends the implementation of a Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Classroom Plan as the primary output of the research. This plan is designed to recognize, respect, and integrate students' diverse cultural backgrounds, learning needs, and perspectives, with the overarching aim of promoting equitable participation, meaningful learning, and a sense of belonging for all learners. Organized around the four areas of concern identified in the study, the plan proposes the conduct of Learning Action Cell sessions, meetings, orientations, feedbacking activities, and benchmarking initiatives involving teachers, school administrators, and expert professionals throughout the school year. Supported by the school's Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses fund, the plan is intended to serve as a practical and evidence-based framework through which schools in the Talibon District may continue to advance culturally responsive and inclusive education for the benefit of every learner they serve.

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