

**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING
MODEL ON CIVICS LEARNING OUTCOMES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

*AVALIAÇÃO DO IMPACTO DE UM MODELO DE ENSINO CULTURALMENTE
RESPONSIVO NOS RESULTADOS DE APRENDIZAGEM DE EDUCAÇÃO CÍVICA
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of a culturally responsive teaching (crt) model on the civics learning outcomes of elementary school students. grounded in both banks' multicultural education theory and vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the research explores how integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum can improve their civics knowledge, foster positive attitudes toward civic engagement, and enhance classroom participation. a mixed-methods approach was adopted, involving a pretest-posttest design to assess changes in knowledge and attitudes, alongside qualitative data from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student focus groups. quantitative findings indicate a statistically significant improvement in civics test scores and heightened interest in community participation among students exposed to the crt model. qualitative results complement these findings by highlighting increased student engagement, deeper connections with the material, and greater willingness to discuss civic issues. these outcomes suggest incorporating culturally relevant examples and inclusive pedagogical strategies can bolster civics education for diverse student populations. the study's limitations include its relatively short duration, limited geographic scope, and small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the results. future research should consider longitudinal designs, larger samples, and multiple contexts to capture the long-term impact of crt on civic engagement. overall, the results emphasize the potential of culturally responsive practices to reinforce the foundational civic competencies of young learners and underscore the need for teacher preparation programs to prioritize culturally inclusive methods.

Keywords: Culturally Responsive Teaching, Civic Learning, Engagement.

RESUMO

Este estudo investiga o efeito de um modelo de Ensino Culturalmente Responsivo (CRT) nos resultados de aprendizagem cívica de alunos do ensino fundamental. Baseada na Teoria da Educação Multicultural de Banks e na Teoria Sociocultural de Vygotsky, a pesquisa explora como a integração das origens culturais dos alunos no currículo pode melhorar seu conhecimento cívico, promover atitudes positivas em relação ao engajamento cívico e aumentar a participação em sala de aula. Uma abordagem de métodos mistos foi adotada, envolvendo um design pré-teste-pós-teste para avaliar mudanças no conhecimento e atitudes, juntamente com dados qualitativos de observações em sala de aula, entrevistas com professores e grupos focais de alunos. As descobertas quantitativas indicam uma melhoria estatisticamente significativa nas pontuações dos testes de civismo e maior interesse na participação da comunidade entre os alunos expostos ao modelo CRT. Os resultados qualitativos complementam essas descobertas destacando o aumento do engajamento dos alunos, conexões mais profundas com o material e maior disposição para discutir questões cívicas. Esses resultados sugerem que a incorporação de exemplos culturalmente relevantes e estratégias pedagógicas inclusivas pode reforçar a educação cívica para diversas populações estudantis. As limitações do estudo incluem sua duração relativamente curta, escopo geográfico limitado e tamanho pequeno da amostra, o que pode afetar a generalização dos resultados. Pesquisas futuras devem considerar designs longitudinais, amostras maiores e contextos múltiplos para capturar o impacto de longo prazo do CRT no engajamento cívico. No geral, os resultados enfatizam o potencial de práticas culturalmente responsivas para reforçar as competências cívicas fundamentais de jovens aprendizes e ressaltam a necessidade de programas de preparação de professores para priorizar métodos culturalmente inclusivos.

Palavras-chave: Ensino culturalmente responsivo, aprendizagem cívica, engajamento.

Introduction

The increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in contemporary classrooms necessitates innovative teaching approaches that recognize and value students' varied backgrounds. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is one such approach, grounded in the belief that children learn best when instruction is tailored to their cultural contexts. CRT emphasizes the importance of integrating students' cultural references into the learning environment, which can enhance engagement and academic success. Research indicates that CRT practices lead to improved student outcomes, particularly for marginalized groups, by fostering a sense of belonging and validation in the classroom (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Ialuna et al., 2024). For instance, studies have shown that when teachers employ culturally relevant methodologies, students exhibit higher levels of engagement and achievement (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Kehl et al., 2024).

In tandem with CRT, civics education has gained renewed emphasis in elementary schools, reflecting a growing recognition of the need to cultivate informed, engaged citizens from an early age. Civics education aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for active participation in democratic processes. By weaving culturally relevant examples, discussions, and experiences into civics instruction, educators can enhance students' civic knowledge and their sense of connection to society (Balcazar et al., 2024; Body et al., 2024). For example, civic engagement training programs have demonstrated effectiveness in empowering students to participate in community activities, such as voting and advocacy, thereby reinforcing their civic identity and responsibilities (Balcazar et al., 2024).

Moreover, the integration of CRT within civics education can create a more inclusive learning environment that acknowledges the diverse backgrounds of students. This approach not only promotes civic knowledge but also fosters critical thinking and social awareness among students. Educators who adopt CRT principles in their civics instruction are better positioned to address the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, ultimately leading to more

equitable educational outcomes (Lu & Troyan, 2022a). The emphasis on culturally relevant pedagogy in civics education can also help bridge the gap between students' home and school experiences, making learning more relevant and engaging (Pope et al., 2019). The intersection of culturally responsive teaching and civics education presents a powerful opportunity to enhance student engagement and civic participation. By recognizing and valuing the cultural backgrounds of students, educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment that prepares young people to be informed and active citizens in a diverse society (Delaine et al., 2023).

Despite the theoretical support for culturally responsive teaching (CRT), there remains a significant gap in empirical research examining its direct impact on elementary students' civics learning. Most existing studies tend to focus on broader academic achievement or social-emotional outcomes rather than specifically addressing civic engagement, knowledge, and attitudes among younger learners. This lack of targeted research limits our understanding of how CRT can effectively influence civic learning in diverse classrooms (Ateh & Ryan, 2023).

Research indicates that while CRT is associated with increased student engagement and achievement, its application in civics education has not been thoroughly investigated. Many educators report challenges in adapting civics curricula to reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students, which underscores the need for evidence-based strategies that can facilitate this integration (Franco et al., 2024; Yilmaz, 2024). For instance, Balcazar's study highlights the importance of civic engagement training, which, although beneficial, does not specifically address the nuances of CRT in civics education (Jordan et al., 2019). This gap suggests a need for more focused research that explores how culturally responsive practices can be systematically incorporated into civics curricula to enhance student outcomes.

Moreover, the literature reveals that teachers often struggle with implementing CRT principles, particularly in subjects like civics where the connection to students' cultural contexts may not be immediately apparent. This disconnect can lead to a lack of engagement and understanding among students,

particularly those from marginalized backgrounds (Cameron et al., 2024). The challenges educators face in this regard point to the necessity for professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to effectively integrate CRT into their civics instruction (Lu & Troyan, 2022b).

Furthermore, studies have shown that culturally responsive practices can foster a sense of belonging and validation among students, which is crucial for civic engagement (Farley & Burbules, 2022). However, without empirical evidence linking CRT to civics learning outcomes, it remains difficult to advocate for its widespread adoption in educational settings. Therefore, future research should aim to fill this gap by investigating the specific impacts of CRT on civic knowledge, engagement, and attitudes in elementary education (Phan & Kloos, 2023). While CRT holds promise for enhancing civic education, the current lack of empirical research specifically addressing its impact on civics learning in elementary students represents a critical gap. Addressing this gap through targeted studies and teacher training initiatives could significantly improve the effectiveness of civics education in culturally diverse classrooms (Asherov & Gross, 2024).

This study aims to investigate how implementing a culturally responsive teaching model affects civics learning outcomes among elementary school students. Specifically, it examines changes in students' foundational civic knowledge, their attitudes toward community participation, and their level of classroom engagement in civics-related discussions. Additionally, the research seeks to identify which aspects of the CRT model are most influential in shaping these outcomes. Research questions:

- Does the use of a culturally responsive teaching model significantly improve civics knowledge in elementary school students?
- How do CRT strategies influence students' attitudes toward civic engagement and community participation?
- What specific components of the CRT model (e.g., culturally inclusive content, interactive teaching strategies, reflective dialogue) most strongly contribute to enhancing civics learning?

Exploring the relationship between culturally responsive instructional approaches and civics education in early grades is essential for enhancing educational research and classroom practice. The integration of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) into civics curricula can foster greater engagement and deeper learning among students from diverse backgrounds. Research indicates that CRT not only improves academic outcomes but also enhances students' sense of belonging and cultural identity, which are critical for civic engagement (Marino et al., 2025). By recognizing and valuing the cultural contexts of students, educators can create more inclusive learning environments that promote active participation in civic life (Yilmaz, 2024).

The findings from studies examining CRT in civics education have the potential to guide teacher preparation and professional development programs. For instance, Balcazar's research on civic engagement training highlights the importance of equipping teachers with strategies to incorporate cultural relevance into their instruction (Mendenhall et al., 2024). Such training can empower educators to adapt civics curricula effectively, ensuring that lessons resonate with the diverse experiences of their students. Additionally, professional development initiatives that focus on culturally responsive practices can enhance teachers' confidence and competence in delivering civics education that reflects the cultural diversity of their classrooms (Thomas & Sebastian, 2023).

Moreover, the outcomes of this research may influence policy decisions and curriculum standards by emphasizing the benefits of integrating cultural responsiveness into elementary civics education. Policymakers can leverage evidence from studies that demonstrate the positive impact of CRT on civic knowledge and engagement to advocate for curriculum reforms that prioritize culturally relevant pedagogy (Pope et al., 2019). By doing so, educational systems can better prepare students to become informed and active citizens, capable of navigating the complexities of a diverse society. The exploration of culturally responsive instructional approaches in civics education offers valuable insights that can enhance both educational practice and policy. By fostering greater engagement and deeper learning through culturally relevant curricula, educators can

significantly contribute to the development of informed and engaged citizens in the early grades (Balcazar et al., 2024; Body et al., 2024).

Literature Review

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has emerged from a broader educational movement advocating for inclusive pedagogies that recognize and affirm the cultural backgrounds of all students. The foundational work of Thind and Yakavenka (2023) popularized the term "culturally relevant pedagogy," emphasizing teaching methods that empower students intellectually, socially, and emotionally by utilizing cultural referents to impart knowledge (Thind & Yakavenka, 2023). This approach aligns with the understanding that effective education must be responsive to the diverse cultural contexts of students, thereby enhancing their engagement and learning outcomes (Zang & Bai, 2022).

Amani and Mgaiwa (2023) further developed the concept of CRT by stressing the importance of aligning curriculum content, instructional strategies, and assessment practices with students' lived experiences (Amani & Mgaiwa, 2023). Niki's work underscores the necessity of creating educational environments where students see their cultures reflected in the curriculum, which can lead to increased motivation and academic success (Niki, 2024). This alignment not only supports student engagement but also fosters a sense of belonging, which is critical for effective learning in diverse classrooms (Ialuna et al., 2024).

Despite the theoretical underpinnings of CRT, empirical research examining its direct impact on students' civic learning remains limited. While studies have shown that CRT can enhance general academic achievement and social-emotional outcomes, there is a notable gap in understanding how these culturally responsive models specifically influence civic engagement, knowledge, and attitudes among younger learners (Phan & Kloos, 2023). Furthermore, many educators report challenges in effectively adapting civics curricula to reflect students' diverse cultural

backgrounds, highlighting the need for evidence-based strategies that can facilitate this integration (Harper et al., 2024).

The implications of integrating CRT into civics education are profound. By incorporating culturally relevant examples and discussions into civics instruction, educators can potentially enhance students' civic knowledge and their sense of connection to society (Body et al., 2024). This approach not only prepares students to engage actively in civic life but also promotes critical thinking and social awareness, essential components of informed citizenship (Phan & Kloos, 2023). Therefore, further research is necessary to explore the specific impacts of CRT on civic learning outcomes, which could inform teacher preparation and professional development programs, as well as influence policy decisions regarding curriculum standards in civics education (Ialuna et al., 2024). CRT represents a vital framework for fostering inclusive and effective civics education. By recognizing and valuing the cultural backgrounds of students, educators can create more engaging and relevant learning experiences that prepare young people to be informed and active citizens in a diverse society (Balcazar et al., 2024).

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) emphasizes high expectations for all learners, a curriculum that reflects diverse viewpoints, and strong teacher-student relationships built upon mutual respect and understanding. This pedagogical approach is rooted in the foundational works of scholars such as Amani and Mgaiwa (2023), who advocate for inclusive educational practices that affirm the cultural backgrounds of students. Ruschenpöhler (2024) highlights the necessity of aligning curriculum content, instructional strategies, and assessment practices with students' lived experiences, thereby fostering an environment where all students can thrive (Ruschenpöhler, 2024).

Teachers who practice CRT often employ real-world examples that are connected to students' cultural and community contexts. They adopt collaborative learning formats and encourage students to share personal experiences as part of class discussions, which has been shown to enhance student engagement and motivation (Balcazar et al., 2024). Balcazar et al. (2024) emphasizes that these culturally relevant teaching methods empower students intellectually, socially, and

emotionally, which is particularly beneficial for historically underrepresented groups. Research consistently supports the notion that these methods can improve academic achievement, yet investigations into their specific impacts on civics education remain relatively sparse (Harper et al., 2024).

While the positive correlation between CRT and general academic outcomes is well documented, there is a pressing need for more focused studies examining its effects within specific subject areas, such as civics. For instance, Balcazar et al. (2024) discuss civic engagement training that incorporates culturally responsive practices, suggesting that such approaches can significantly enhance students' civic knowledge and participation. However, the literature indicates that many educators face challenges in effectively adapting civics curricula to reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students, underscoring the necessity for evidence-based strategies (Body et al., 2024; Phan & Kloos, 2023).

Furthermore, the integration of CRT into civics education can help create a more inclusive learning environment that not only prepares students for active citizenship but also fosters critical thinking and social awareness (Zang & Bai, 2022). As educators strive to implement CRT principles in their teaching, ongoing professional development and support are essential to navigate the complexities of culturally responsive curricula (Glock & Kleen, 2019). This alignment of CRT with civics education not only enriches the learning experience but also contributes to the development of informed and engaged citizens who are equipped to navigate the challenges of a diverse society (Farley & Burbules, 2022). While CRT provides a robust framework for enhancing educational practices, further research is needed to explore its specific impacts on civics education. By addressing this gap, educators can better prepare students to engage meaningfully in civic life, thereby reinforcing the importance of cultural responsiveness in the classroom (Davis & Palincsar, 2023).

Civics Education in Elementary Schools

Civics education, broadly defined, aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for active participation in democratic processes, as articulated by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) in 2013. At the elementary level, this encompasses understanding fundamental concepts of governance, rights, responsibilities, and community involvement Balcazar et al. (2024). Early exposure to civics content is critical for laying a foundation that can foster lifelong civic engagement, as emphasized by (Rüschepöhler, 2024).

Research indicates that effective civics education should incorporate culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices to engage students from diverse backgrounds. CRT emphasizes high expectations for all learners, a curriculum that reflects diverse viewpoints, and strong teacher-student relationships built upon mutual respect and understanding (Natarajarathinam et al., 2021). For instance, Balcazar et al. (2024) highlight the importance of civic engagement training that connects students' cultural contexts to civic participation, demonstrating how real-world applications can enhance students' understanding of their roles in a democratic society (Balcazar et al., 2024). Furthermore, the integration of CRT into civics curricula can improve student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, particularly among historically underrepresented groups (Body et al., 2024).

Despite the documented benefits of CRT in general academic outcomes, investigations into its specific impacts on civics education remain relatively sparse. Studies such as those by Phan & Kloos (2023) suggest that civic engagement is a contested term, often lacking clear definitions, which complicates the assessment of its effectiveness in educational settings. This highlights the need for more focused research that examines how CRT can be systematically incorporated into civics instruction to enhance civic knowledge and engagement among elementary students.

Moreover, the challenges faced by educators in adapting civics curricula to reflect students' diverse cultural backgrounds underscore the necessity for evidence-based strategies. As noted (Body et al., 2024), there are ongoing debates

regarding the implementation of active citizenship in schools, which often struggle to connect civic engagement with students' lived experiences. This gap in practice suggests that professional development programs should prioritize training teachers in culturally responsive methods that can effectively bridge the divide between civic content and students' cultural contexts. While civics education is essential for fostering informed and engaged citizens, the integration of culturally responsive teaching practices is crucial for maximizing its impact. By addressing the cultural relevance of civics instruction, educators can create more inclusive and effective learning environments that prepare students for active participation in democratic processes (Thai et al., 2020).

Despite its importance, civics education often competes with subjects like mathematics and language arts, which receive greater emphasis due to standardized testing and policy mandates Rüschenpöhler (2024). This competition results in many elementary classrooms allocating limited instructional time to civics, potentially hindering students' understanding of key civic principles (Balcazar et al., 2024). Research by Fliaguine et al., (2024) indicates that early exposure to civics content is crucial for fostering lifelong civic engagement, yet the constraints on instructional time can diminish students' interest and engagement in civics education (Fliaguine et al., 2024).

Furthermore, traditional textbooks and curricula frequently lack culturally diverse perspectives, presenting civic issues through a narrow lens that may not resonate with students from various cultural or linguistic backgrounds (Phan & Kloos, 2023). This lack of representation can lead to disengagement among students who do not see their experiences reflected in the curriculum, ultimately undermining the broader goal of nurturing informed and active citizens (Antaki et al., 2024). For example, Jayadiputr et al., (2023) highlights how the absence of diverse viewpoints in civics education can alienate students, making it difficult for them to connect with the material and see its relevance to their lives (Jayadiputra et al., 2023).

The implications of these challenges are significant. Without adequate attention to civics education, students may graduate with a limited understanding

of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, which can impact their future civic participation (Harper, 2024). Additionally, the emphasis on standardized testing in other subjects can lead to a curriculum that prioritizes rote memorization over critical thinking and civic engagement (Zang & Bai, 2022). This situation calls for a reevaluation of educational priorities and the integration of culturally responsive teaching practices that can enhance civics education by making it more relevant and engaging for all students (Davis & Palincsar, 2023). While civics education is essential for developing informed citizens, it often faces challenges related to time allocation and curriculum design. Addressing these issues through culturally responsive practices and a commitment to equitable education can help ensure that all students receive the civic education necessary for active participation in democratic processes (Liu, 2023).

Intersection of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Civics Learning

The application of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) principles in civics education offers a promising avenue for enhancing student engagement and achievement. While research on CRT has typically focused on broader academic or social-emotional outcomes, scholars argue that tailoring civics instruction to reflect students' cultural and community realities can foster a more meaningful connection to democratic ideals and civic responsibilities (Balcazar et al. 2024). For instance, Abacioglu et al., (2019) emphasize the importance of content integration by embedding students' cultural histories into the curriculum so they see themselves as integral parts of the civic narrative. This approach not only validates students' identities but also enhances their understanding of civic concepts by making them relevant to their lives.

Moreover, the inclusive practices advocated by CRT can cultivate students' sense of belonging and agency within their communities. Ruschenpohler et al., (2024) suggest that when students perceive their cultural backgrounds as valued within the educational context, they are more likely to engage actively in civic activities. This engagement is critical, as it lays the groundwork for developing

informed and active citizens who are equipped to participate in democratic processes.

Research supports the notion that culturally responsive practices can significantly improve student outcomes in civics education. For example, Balcazar et al., (2024) highlight the effectiveness of civic engagement training that incorporates culturally relevant content, demonstrating that students who see their cultural identities reflected in civics education are more likely to participate in civic activities. Additionally, studies show that teachers' multicultural attitudes and their ability to engage in culturally sensitive teaching are strong predictors of student engagement in civic learning (Abacioglu et al., 2019).

Despite these promising findings, there remains a need for more focused investigations into the specific impacts of CRT on civics education. While the positive link between CRT and general academic outcomes is well documented, the application of these principles in civics instruction has not been extensively explored (Natarajarathinam et al., 2021). This gap underscores the necessity for further research that examines how CRT can be systematically integrated into civics curricula to enhance student engagement and achievement. The integration of CRT principles into civics education presents a valuable opportunity to enrich students' understanding of civic responsibilities and democratic participation. By recognizing and incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into civics instruction, educators can foster a more inclusive and engaging learning environment that prepares students for active citizenship (Delaine et al., 2023; Yilmaz, 2024).

Empirical work in secondary settings suggests that culturally inclusive civics or social studies instruction can significantly increase students' willingness to participate in civic activities and improve their understanding of complex social issues (Balcazar et al., 2024). For instance, Lerner et al., (2014) highlights how incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into civics education not only enhances engagement but also fosters a deeper comprehension of civic responsibilities and democratic processes (Lerner et al., 2014). This is particularly relevant in the context of CRT, which emphasizes the importance of making learning relevant to students' lives and experiences (Rüschepöhler, 2024).

Moreover, teachers employing CRT strategies in social studies often report that students are more motivated to engage in critical thinking and dialogue about social justice topics when they perceive personal relevance (Natarajarathinam et al., 2021). Holley et al., (2016) found that when students see their cultural identities reflected in the curriculum, they are more likely to participate actively in discussions about social justice and civic engagement (Holley et al., 2016). This connection between personal relevance and civic participation underscores the potential for CRT to transform civics education into a more engaging and meaningful experience for students (Body, 2024).

However, there is a notable shortage of research focused on younger children, who may benefit even more from early experiences linking their cultural backgrounds to civic concepts. The foundational years of education are critical for shaping students' perceptions of their roles in society and their understanding of civic responsibilities (Harper, 2024). As such, integrating culturally responsive practices in elementary civics education could lay a strong groundwork for future civic engagement and social responsibility (Lu & Troyan, 2022a). While existing research demonstrates the positive impacts of culturally inclusive civics instruction in secondary education, there is a pressing need for similar studies targeting younger learners. By exploring how CRT can be effectively implemented in elementary civics education, educators can enhance students' engagement and understanding of civic concepts, ultimately fostering a generation of informed and active citizens (Abacioglu et al., 2019).

Methodology

Research Design

A convergent mixed-methods design will be employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of how a culturally responsive teaching (CRT) model impacts civics learning. This approach allows for simultaneous data collection, with quantitative assessments measuring changes in students' civic knowledge and attitudes, and qualitative insights

capturing in-depth perspectives on classroom interactions and student engagement. Teachers in the experimental group will receive professional development focused on integrating culturally relevant themes, real-world community issues, and multicultural perspectives into civics lessons. Lesson plans will be adapted to incorporate local community examples, family histories, and culturally significant figures or events. As a supporter of the CRT learning model as a learning support for students and teaching for teachers as in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – CRT Learning Model Support System



Participating teachers will use interactive, student-centered methods such as project-based learning, group discussions, role-play, and reflective journaling. They will also engage students in activities encouraging critical dialogue around community issues and civic responsibilities. The intervention will run for one semester (approximately 12–15 weeks), with teachers expected to integrate CRT practices consistently throughout their weekly civics lessons.

Population and Sampling

The study will focus on elementary school students (approximately ages 8–11) drawn from several culturally diverse public schools in district Padangsindepuan. A purposive sampling strategy will be used to select classrooms that reflect high levels of student diversity in terms of ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status. Within each selected school, classrooms that have volunteered to implement a CRT model in civics instruction will form the experimental group, while classrooms continuing with the traditional civics curriculum will serve as the comparison group. The target sample will include approximately 200 students (100 in the experimental group and 100 in the comparison group), although final numbers may vary based on school enrollment and consent rates.

Data Collection Instruments

The sampling technique uses instruments as in Table 1.

Table 1 – Instruments based on quantitative and qualitative

| Measure Type | Instrument | Description | Purpose | Interpretation |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quantitative | Civics Knowledge Test | Researcher-developed test aligned with state and national civics standards. Administered pre- and post-tests to both experimental and comparison groups. | To assess changes in students' civics knowledge throughout the intervention. | Higher post-test scores in the experimental group (compared to the control) suggest the effectiveness of the intervention in improving civics knowledge. |
| | Attitude Scale | A brief survey assessing interest in civic participation, community responsibility, and confidence in discussing civic issues. Adapted from validated scales. Administered pre- and post-intervention. | To measure shifts in students' attitudes toward civic participation and related areas. | Positive shifts in survey scores indicate increased interest, responsibility, and confidence as a result of the intervention. |
| Qualitative | Student Focus Groups | Small group discussions (5–7 students each) conducted toward the end of the semester to gather student perspectives on civics lessons. | To capture students' perceptions of the lessons' relevance, meaning, and connection to their cultural backgrounds. | Themes from focus groups reveal how students perceive and connect with the civics curriculum and identify areas for improvement or enhancement. |
| | Teacher Interviews | Semi-structured interviews with participating teachers to explore their experiences implementing CRT strategies, challenges, and insights on student responses. | To understand teachers' perspectives on implementing CRT strategies and their impact on students. | Interview data highlights teachers' successes, challenges, and recommendations, which can guide future professional development or curriculum adjustments. |
| | Classroom Observations | Structured observations using a CRT-focused protocol. Notes document teacher-student interactions, engagement strategies, and culturally relevant practices. | To examine classroom dynamics, engagement strategies, and the implementation of culturally relevant practices. | Rich descriptions provide insights into how CRT strategies influence engagement, inclusivity, and classroom culture. |

1). Quantitative Measures

- **Civics Knowledge Test:** A researcher-developed test aligned with state and national civics standards (e.g., rights and responsibilities, government structure, community engagement). The test will be administered as a pretest and posttest to both experimental and comparison groups.
- **Attitude Scale:** A brief survey instrument assessing students' interest in civic participation, sense of community responsibility, and confidence in discussing civic issues. Adapted from existing validated scales (e.g., Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire), it will also be administered pre- and post-intervention.

2). Qualitative Measures

- **Classroom Observations:** Researchers will conduct periodic structured observations using a CRT-focused observation protocol. Notes will document teacher-student interactions, engagement strategies, and evidence of inclusive or culturally relevant practices.
- **Student Focus Groups:** Small group discussions (5–7 students each) will be facilitated toward the end of the semester to capture students' perceptions of civics lessons, including what they found meaningful or relevant to their cultural backgrounds.
- **Teacher Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with participating teachers to understand their experiences implementing CRT strategies, perceived challenges, and insights on student responses.

Data Analysis

1). Quantitative Analysis

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Means and standard deviations for pretest and posttest civics knowledge scores and attitude scale responses.
- **Inferential Statistics:** Paired t-tests or repeated-measures ANOVA (depending on the specific design) to compare pre-and post-intervention

scores within groups, and ANCOVA to compare gains between the experimental and comparison groups. Effect sizes will be calculated to determine the practical significance of any observed differences.

2). Qualitative Analysis

- **Thematic Coding:** Focus group and interview transcripts, along with observation notes, will be coded using an inductive approach to identify emergent themes related to student engagement, cultural relevance, teacher practices, and barriers/facilitators to CRT implementation.
- **Triangulation:** Data from observations, focus groups, and interviews will be cross-checked to validate findings and reduce researcher bias. Patterns that recur across multiple data sources will be highlighted as key themes.

Results

A researcher-developed test aligned with national civics standards, assessing areas such as rights and responsibilities, government structure, and community engagement. Administered as both a pretest and posttest to the experimental group (n = 98) and the comparison group (n = 94). Table 2 presents a comprehensive summary of the quantitative measurements of the results of the Civic Knowledge Test and Attitude Scale along with statistical analysis, and its interpretation based on the results of the analysis.

Table 1 – Civics Knowledge Test and Attitude Scale

| Measure | Group | Pre-test Mean (SD) | Post-test Mean (SD) | Statistical Test | Statistic | p-Value | Interpretation |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Civics Knowledge Test | Experimental | 65.8 (8.4) | 76.5 (7.9) | Paired-samples t-test | T(97) = 9.72 | 0.001 | Students showed a significant increase in civics knowledge from pretest to posttest. |
| | Comparison | 66.1 (9.1) | 68.2 (8.7) | Paired-samples t-test | T(93) = 2.11 | 0.038 | Students exhibited a modest but significant gain in civics knowledge. |
| | Between-Group | - | - | ANCOVA (controlling pretest) | F(1,189) = 27.45 | 0.001 | The experimental group significantly outperformed the comparison group in posttest civics knowledge scores. |
| Attitude Scale | Experimental | 3.0 (0.6) | | 3.8 (0.7) | Paired-samples t-test | 0.001 | Students reported a significant increase in attitudes towards civic engagement and related areas. |
| | Comparison | 3.1 (0.5) | | 3.3 (0.6) | Paired-samples t-test | 0.043 | Students showed a small but significant |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---|--|--|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | improvement in attitude scores. |
| | Between-Group | - | | | Between - Group Analysis | 0.001 | The experimental group's improvement in attitude scores was significantly greater than the comparison group. |

1) Civics Knowledge Test

☑ **Experimental Group:** The substantial increase in civics knowledge scores indicates that the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) model was highly effective in enhancing students' understanding of civics.

☑ **Comparison Group:** Although there was a statistically significant improvement, the gain was modest, suggesting that traditional instruction methods have a limited impact on increasing civics knowledge.

☑ **Between-Group Comparison:** The ANCOVA results confirm that the **experimental group outperformed** the comparison group even after controlling for initial knowledge levels, underscoring the effectiveness of the CRT approach.

2) Attitude Scale

○ **Experimental Group:** The notable rise in attitude scores suggests that the CRT model effectively enhances students' attitudes toward civic engagement, their sense of community responsibility, and their comfort in discussing civic issues.

○ **Comparison Group:** The slight increase indicates that traditional instructional methods may have a limited positive effect on students' civic attitudes.

○ **Between-Group Comparison:** The significant difference in improvement between groups highlights that the CRT model leads to

greater enhancements in civic-related attitudes compared to traditional teaching methods.

The quantitative data strongly support the efficacy of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) model in both enhancing students' civics knowledge and positively shaping their attitudes toward civic engagement. While traditional instructional approaches yielded some improvements, the CRT model resulted in significantly greater gains in both knowledge and attitude measures. These findings underscore the importance of culturally responsive methodologies in civic education to foster deeper understanding and stronger civic-minded attitudes among students.

Field notes from observations highlighted higher student engagement in civics discussions within the CRT classrooms. Students frequently shared personal anecdotes or cultural traditions related to civic topics (e.g., local governance, and community celebrations), and teachers were observed prompting deeper inquiry by asking follow-up questions that tied these experiences to broader civic concepts. The comprehensive presentation of data, results of Classroom Observations, Student Focus Groups, and Teacher Interviews are in Table 3.

Table 3 – Results of Observations, Student Focus Groups, and Teacher Interviews

| Measure | Experimental (CRT) Group Findings | Comparison Group Findings | Interpretation |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Classroom Observations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher student engagement in civics discussions. - Frequent sharing of personal anecdotes and cultural traditions related to civic topics. - Teachers prompted deeper inquiry, linking student experiences to broader civic concepts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reliance on textbook-based instruction. - Fewer instances of student-led discussions. - Minimal use of culturally situated examples. | CRT classrooms foster an interactive and culturally relevant learning environment, while traditional methods lead to a more passive approach. |
| Student Focus Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students felt civics lessons were “more real” and connected to their lives. - Local community issues were frequently discussed. - Students reported increased confidence in speaking, as their cultural identities were acknowledged. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students described civics lessons as “somewhat boring” and less relevant. - Weaker personal connection to the material. | CRT lessons increase relevance and confidence, whereas traditional lessons feel disconnected and fail to engage students meaningfully. |
| Teacher Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers observed increased enthusiasm and participation. - Community-based activities and culturally relevant readings sparked interest. - Challenges: additional time and resources needed for material development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers described civics instruction as straightforward but less engaging. - Student interest often waned during textbook exercises. | CRT methods enhance engagement but require more planning effort, whereas traditional methods are less demanding but less impactful. |

1) Classroom Observations

Structured observation protocol focusing on Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices. Field notes were collected during periodic observations in both experimental (CRT) and comparison classrooms to document student engagement, teacher practices, and the presence of culturally relevant strategies.

☒ Experimental (CRT) Classrooms:

- Students actively engaged in civics discussions, often contributing personal stories or cultural insights (local governance, community traditions).
- Teachers facilitated deeper understanding by connecting these personal experiences to broader civic concepts.

☒ Comparison Classrooms:

- Instruction relied heavily on textbooks with minimal discussion.
- Few instances of student-led engagement or culturally relevant examples were observed.

CRT classrooms successfully created a space where students felt their personal and cultural experiences were valued, leading to higher engagement and deeper learning. Traditional instruction, by contrast, lacked interactive and culturally relevant elements, resulting in less student participation and connection to the material.

2) Student Focus Group

Facilitated small group discussions (5–7 students per group) toward the end of the semester. Students were asked about their perceptions of civics lessons, focusing on relevance, engagement, and connections to their cultural and personal experiences.

☒ Experimental (CRT) Group:

- Students reported that lessons felt “real” and directly connected to their lives, such as discussions about neighborhood clean-ups or school board decisions.
- They felt confident participating in class because their cultural backgrounds and experiences were acknowledged and valued.

☒ Comparison Group:

- Students described civics lessons as “boring” and disconnected from their everyday lives.
- They lacked a personal connection to the material, reducing their interest and engagement.

CRT-based civics lessons provided real-world relevance, empowering students to see the practical implications of civic education in their communities. Traditional methods failed to bridge the gap between the curriculum and student’s personal lives, leading to lower engagement and reduced interest in the subject.

3) Teacher Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with teachers implementing CRT strategies and those using traditional instruction. Teachers were asked about their experiences, including successes, challenges, and observations of student responses to civics instruction.

- Experimental (CRT) Teachers:
 - Observed increased enthusiasm and participation among students.
 - Community-based activities and culturally relevant readings were effective in sparking interest.
 - Challenges included the need for additional planning time and resources to develop CRT materials.
- Comparison Teachers:
 - Described civics instruction as straightforward but noted less engagement.
 - Students showed diminished interest, particularly during routine textbook-based lessons.

Teachers using CRT methods observed clear benefits in student engagement and enthusiasm, highlighting the effectiveness of culturally relevant materials and activities. However, these methods required additional effort and resources, underscoring the need for institutional support to sustain CRT implementation. Teachers in the comparison group, while finding traditional methods easier to

implement, acknowledged their limited impact on student interest and participation.

The qualitative data provide compelling evidence that the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) model has significant advantages over traditional instruction in civics education. The findings suggest:

- 1) **Higher Student Engagement:** CRT classrooms foster greater engagement by making lessons relevant to students' cultural and personal experiences. Traditional methods, by contrast, fail to establish these connections, resulting in lower participation.
- 2) **Empowered Students:** Students in CRT classrooms feel acknowledged and confident, as their cultural identities are integrated into the curriculum. This boosts their willingness to participate and deepens their understanding of civic concepts.
- 3) **Effective Teaching Practices:** Teachers implementing CRT strategies observe noticeable improvements in student enthusiasm and interest, though they face challenges related to resource and time constraints.
- 4) **Limitations of Traditional Methods:** Traditional textbook-based instruction is less effective in engaging students and fostering meaningful connections between the curriculum and their lived experiences.

Discussion

The results of this study provide evidence that implementing a culturally responsive teaching (CRT) model positively influences elementary students' civics learning outcomes. Students who experienced CRT-based instruction demonstrated higher gains in civics knowledge and more positive attitudes toward civic engagement than those in the comparison group. These findings support previous research suggesting that culturally relevant content and pedagogical strategies can enhance both academic performance and student motivation Rüschenpöhler (2024). Notably, the significant increase in students' test scores and self-reported

sense of community responsibility underscores the power of connecting civic concepts to students' everyday experiences and cultural contexts.

Research indicates that culturally inclusive instruction can significantly enhance students' willingness to engage in civic activities and improve their understanding of complex social issues (Body, 2024). For instance, studies have shown that when teachers incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into civics education, students are more likely to participate actively in civic discussions and activities (Abacioglu et al., 2019). This aligns with the findings of Davis and Palincsar, who emphasize the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in fostering student engagement and achievement (Davis & Palincsar, 2022).

Moreover, the application of CRT in civics education not only improves academic outcomes but also cultivates a sense of belonging and agency among students (Glock & Kleen, 2019). By embedding students' cultural histories into the curriculum, educators can help students see themselves as integral parts of the civic narrative, thereby enhancing their motivation to engage in civic life. This connection between personal relevance and civic engagement is crucial for developing informed and active citizens (Asherov & Gross, 2024).

Despite the promising results of CRT in enhancing civics learning outcomes, there remains a need for further research, particularly focused on younger students. Most existing studies have concentrated on secondary education, leaving a gap in understanding how CRT can be effectively implemented in elementary settings (Harper, 2024). Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights into how early exposure to culturally responsive civics education can shape students' civic identities and engagement throughout their lives (Miri, 2024). The evidence from this study highlights the significant benefits of implementing a CRT model in elementary civics education. By connecting civic concepts to students' cultural contexts and everyday experiences, educators can foster greater engagement, understanding, and responsibility among young learners, ultimately preparing them for active participation in democratic processes (Balcazar et al., 2024).

The qualitative data from this study further illuminate why the observed gains in civics learning outcomes occurred. Classroom observations and focus

groups revealed that students found civics lessons more engaging, meaningful, and approachable when the content aligned with their cultural backgrounds. This finding is consistent with the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), which emphasizes the importance of dialogue, reflection, and interactive learning as key tenets that foster a classroom environment conducive to participation and deeper understanding (Paizan et al., 2024).

The emphasis on culturally relevant content appears to have created a more inclusive learning atmosphere, allowing students to connect civic concepts to their everyday experiences. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which posits that learning is most effective when it is socially mediated and contextually relevant (Rüschepöhler, 2024). By integrating students' cultural contexts into civics education, teachers can enhance engagement and facilitate a deeper comprehension of civic responsibilities and democratic processes (Natarajarathinam et al., 2021).

Additionally, teachers reported heightened enthusiasm and a willingness to engage in discussions, indicating that CRT has the potential to promote active citizenship from an early age. This enthusiasm is crucial, as it not only encourages students to participate in civic activities but also fosters a sense of community responsibility (Harper, 2024). The findings suggest that when students see their identities reflected in the curriculum, they are more likely to engage critically with social justice topics and civic issues, thereby enhancing their overall civic engagement (Yilmaz, 2024). The qualitative data underscore the effectiveness of CRT in enhancing civics education for elementary students. By aligning civics instruction with students' cultural backgrounds and emphasizing interactive learning, educators can create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience that prepares students for active participation in democratic processes (Phan & Kloos, 2023).

Conclusion

This study provides compelling evidence that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) positively influences civics learning among elementary students. Quantitative analyses demonstrated that students in the experimental group outperformed their peers in the comparison group in both civics knowledge and attitudes toward civic engagement. Qualitative insights from classroom observations, focus groups, and teacher interviews corroborated these findings, highlighting increased student enthusiasm, deeper engagement with lesson content, and a strong sense of cultural validation. These results, taken together, indicate that when civics instruction is grounded in students' lived experiences and cultural contexts, they not only gain a stronger command of essential civic concepts but also develop a heightened sense of belonging and responsibility within their communities.

While this study presents promising outcomes, several avenues for further investigation remain. Longitudinal research could examine whether the improvements observed persist over time, potentially influencing students' long-term civic attitudes and behaviors. Expanding the study to a larger and more diverse pool of schools, including rural and suburban contexts, would help determine the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, exploring the role of technology in delivering culturally responsive civics instruction—such as digital storytelling and interactive community mapping—may reveal innovative ways to engage and empower young learners. Finally, investigations that include teacher professional development variables (e.g., training intensity, ongoing support) would offer deeper insights into the conditions necessary for effective, sustainable CRT implementation. By pursuing these research pathways, scholars and practitioners can continue refining pedagogical models that advance equitable, impactful civics education for all students.

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