



THE ROLE OF SCHOOL CULTURE IN SHAPING THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KERICHO COUNTY, KENYA

CHEPKIRUI BETTY, PACHO, TITUS AND NYATUKA BENARD

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to investigate the role of school culture in shaping the development of intercultural competence among students in public secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive research approach. 5 Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs), 209 principals, 418 classroom teachers, and 418 student leaders (representing Form 1 and Form 2 classes) from 209 public secondary schools made up the target population. With 5 QASOs, 57 principals, 116 class teachers, and 116 student leaders, the sample size was 294; these individuals represented 20%, 40%, and 40% of their respective target groups. The sample size was calculated for the study using the Slovin formula. For class teachers and student leaders, representativeness was guaranteed through the use of cluster sampling and stratified random sampling; purposive sampling was employed for principals and QASOs. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data, and 10% of the sample size from six public secondary schools in Baringo County participated in a pilot project. SPSS was utilized to calculate descriptive statistics, while Pearson correlations were employed for inferential statistics. Tables and charts were used to display the results, and narratives were used to show the qualitative data that had undergone theme analysis. The findings demonstrated that there was a high and statistically significant positive connection ($r = 0.625$, $p < 0.01$) between students' intercultural competence and school culture, indicating that intercultural competence had a positive relationship with enhanced school culture. School Culture emerges as a significant predictor of Intercultural Competence among Students ($\beta = 0.228$, $p = 0.029$).

KEYWORDS: Public Secondary Schools; the Development of Intercultural Competence; School Culture

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, multicultural education and intercultural competence are vital for fostering co-existence by equipping students and teachers with the skills, attitudes, and

knowledge necessary to appreciate and respect diverse cultures (Bardi & Guerra, 2021; Jokikokko, Uitto & Estola, 2019; Torre, Fine, Alexander, et al., 2019). Intercultural competence, defined as the ability to interact effectively with people from varied cultural backgrounds, is central to reducing

Chepkirui Betty, Department of Educational Foundations, Administration, planning and Economics, Kisii University

Pacho, Titus, Department of Educational Foundations, Administration, planning and Economics, Kisii University

Nyatuka Benard, Department of Educational Foundations, Administration, planning and Economics, Kisii University

prejudice, enhancing communication, and preparing individuals for diverse and innovative societies (Shin, Lee & Lee, 2019; Byram, Dervin & Risager, 2019; Deardorff, 2018). Multicultural education, as a method of instruction, integrates these values into teaching practices, creating opportunities for students to engage with different cultures, which helps to develop empathy, critical thinking, and mutual respect (Nieto & Bode, 2018; Ng & Rury, 2018). These aspects highlight the importance of integrating intercultural competence into the curriculum to prepare students for success in multicultural societies, particularly in diverse educational contexts such as Kenya.

Globally, multicultural education has been implemented in regions like Europe, America, and Asia to address cultural diversity and promote intercultural competence (Dervin, 2019; European Union, 2019; American Council on Education, 2019). In these regions, it fosters cultural awareness, effective communication, and social harmony while preparing students for diverse professional environments (Bardi & Guerra, 2021; Jokikokko et al., 2019; Torre et al., 2019). In Africa, intercultural competence plays a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and addressing conflicts associated with cultural diversity (Nyamapfene & Mavhunga, 2020; African Union, 2019). Despite its potential, multicultural education faces challenges, such as resistance, inadequate resources, and unequal power dynamics, which often hinder its effectiveness (Nieto, 2020; Janssens & Van Praag, 2019). These global insights underscore the need for studies that examine the contextual application of multicultural education in shaping intercultural competence, particularly in culturally diverse environments like public secondary schools in Kericho County.

In Kenya, secondary schools represent a microcosm of cultural diversity, creating opportunities to explore how school culture influences the development of intercultural competence. Kericho County, known for its multi-ethnic composition, provides a unique context for such a study, as schools play a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and cultural awareness. School culture, encompassing values, norms, and practices, is instrumental in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors toward diversity. Effective school cultures that integrate multicultural education principles can promote mutual respect, address stereotypes, and develop students' ability

to interact effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Given the increasing importance of intercultural competence in fostering social cohesion and preparing students for globalized societies, this study is justified in exploring the role of school culture in shaping these competencies among students in Kericho County's public secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the role of school culture in shaping the development of intercultural competence among students in public secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya.

Research Questions

What is the role of school culture in shaping the development of intercultural competence among students in public secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya?

Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by the Multiculturalism Theory, a theory proposed by Will Kymlicka (1995), emphasizing the recognition and accommodation of cultural diversity within societies to promote inclusion and equal opportunities. The theory argues that minority groups should have the right to maintain their distinct identities while participating fully in the broader society. Its relevance to the present study lies in its emphasis on fostering inclusive policies and practices that enhance social cohesion, equity, and representation, aligning with efforts to address diversity-related challenges in education, governance, or community development. In Kericho County's public secondary schools, this framework examines school culture's role in fostering intercultural competence, addressing ethnic tensions, and promoting unity in Kenya's diverse society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence, which enables students to effectively communicate and interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, has been widely studied in Europe, the United States, and Asia. In Europe, research highlights the significance of study abroad programs, teacher education, and educational policies in fostering intercultural competence (Šramová et al., 2020; Yurdakul et al., 2021). Similarly, in the United States, intercultural competence development is integrated into higher education, K-12 programs, and study abroad initiatives, enhancing

communication and collaboration among students (Kervin & McFarland, 2021; Williams et al., 2020; Lawless et al., 2018). Studies in Asia, such as in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Japan, emphasize the role of multicultural education, language learning, and study abroad programs in promoting cultural self-awareness, knowledge, and cross-cultural engagement (Lai, Chen & Zhu, 2019; Wan Jaafar, Mustapha & Ariffin, 2018).

Research in Indonesia by Hermino (2017) highlights the role of school curricula in fostering social attitudes such as respect, compassion, and tolerance, demonstrating education-based peace efforts through transformational learning. Similarly, in Rwanda, post-genocide educational reforms have been crucial in promoting national cohesion and reshaping students' values. Laryea (2018) explored deep listening in online learning, emphasizing transformational pedagogy that enhances students' understanding and processing of experiences. These studies underscore the importance of school culture in fostering intercultural competence and academic success. However, existing research primarily focuses on other countries, with limited studies on the school culture context in Kericho County, Kenya. Examining its impact on students' intercultural competence is vital for effective multicultural education implementation.

In Africa, intercultural competence development has gained attention due to globalization and the need to address diversity and inclusion. Community engagement and study abroad programs have been found effective in South Africa and Ghana, fostering knowledge, attitudes, and communication skills necessary for cross-cultural interactions (Jansen & Ngidi, 2020; Amoah, 2019). Similarly, multicultural education programs in Nigeria and Zimbabwe have enhanced students' appreciation of cultural differences and cross-cultural communication (Ezeudu, 2018; Makura et al., 2021). Teacher education programs in South Africa have also been pivotal in promoting intercultural competence among students by improving teaching practices and inclusivity (Malinga et al., 2018).

In Kenya, multicultural education has been identified as a key strategy for fostering intercultural competence among secondary school students. Research indicates that such programs have positively impacted students' ability to appreciate cultural diversity, develop

communication skills, and address issues of social inclusion (Mulwa et al., 2021). The growing emphasis on multicultural education across Africa highlights the importance of integrating intercultural competence development into the curriculum to prepare students for globalized and diverse societies. These findings underscore the need for continued research and practical applications in educational contexts like Kericho County, where cultural diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for fostering intercultural competence.

School Culture and the Development of Intercultural Competence

School culture, defined by shared values and practices, significantly impacts student outcomes (Kim & Park, 2019). Positive school cultures foster inclusion and academic success, as seen in Li and Li's (2021) study on Chinese students abroad. Conversely, exclusion and discrimination hinder development, as Ng and Rury (2019) observed in Canada. Despite global research, studies in Kericho County, Kenya, remain limited. Factors like labeling and achievement gaps (Pherali & Magee, 2019; Banks & Banks, 2010) highlight the need to explore school culture's role in fostering intercultural competence and reducing marginalization.

Empowering school culture, a cornerstone of multicultural education, involves structural changes to ensure equality for students from diverse backgrounds (Banks & Banks, 2010; Cole & Zhou, 2014). Transforming curricula, teaching methods, and attitudes fosters inclusive environments that support equity and intercultural competence (Widodo, 2019). Positive school cultures promote holistic education and responsible behavior through explicit instruction in self-control and conflict resolution (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Pherali, 2019). While global research highlights school culture's role in fostering diversity and social cohesion (Hermino, 2017; Taka, 2020; Laryea, 2018), studies in Kericho County, Kenya, remain limited, necessitating further exploration.

The studies reviewed in the literature are not generalizable to the context of Kericho County, Kenya, because they are based on different cultural, geographical and educational settings. The studies by Li and Li (2021), Ng and Rury (2019) and Pherali and Magee (2019) focus on the experiences of students from diverse cultural backgrounds in countries such as China,

Canada and the United States. These countries have different histories, policies and practices of multicultural education than Kenya. Moreover, the studies do not address the specific challenges and opportunities faced by students in Kericho County, which is a rural area with a predominantly Kalenjin population. Therefore, the findings of these studies cannot be directly applied to the situation of students in Kericho County, who may have different needs, preferences and expectations regarding intercultural competence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was selected for this purpose, characterized by systematic observation and reporting of phenomena without interference (Kothari & Garg, 2021). This methodology allowed for accurate descriptions and analyses of students' behaviors and relationships within the educational context. Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires directed at teachers, allowing for efficiency and broader outreach, while qualitative insights were obtained from more nuanced interviews with principals and student leaders (Liamputtong, 2021).

The sample population was drawn from public secondary schools across the six sub-counties of Kericho County, comprising principals, class teachers, student leaders, and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs). A multi-stage sampling approach was adopted, utilizing cluster sampling to identify sub-counties and stratified random sampling to ensure representation across various categories of participants (Babayev & Mahmudov, 2023). The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula. The resulting sample encompassed 294 respondents, facilitating a rich data collection process that would underpin the study's conclusions on the role of multicultural education in developing intercultural competencies.

For data collection, the researcher employed a combination of questionnaires and interview schedules. The decision not to include document review or analysis as an instrument was based on considerations of feasibility and the focus on gathering firsthand perspectives. Pilot research was carried out in 6 public secondary schools (10 percent of the sample size – 42 schools x 10%) in Baringo County. This translated to 5 principals, 9 teachers, and 9 student leaders.

Content validity of the questionnaire was ensured by aligning each section with established principles and literature on intercultural competence. This was achieved with the help of experts such as University experts. Concurrent and predictive validity were addressed by cross-referencing with existing measures and assessing the ability to forecast outcomes. Face validity was confirmed through expert review. The researcher contributed by developing appropriate questions, piloting the instrument, and minimizing biases, ensuring reliability through consistent administration. Reliability was assessed using piloted data and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, with a value above 0.7 confirming high reliability for the instruments used in the study.

The research study used a mixed-methods approach, analyzing the data gathered using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Closed-ended questions from the surveys were coded and added to the version 25 databases of the statistical software package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to collect quantitative data. The dataset was cleansed and abnormalities were handled. In order to examine respondent characteristics and research objectives, descriptive statistics were produced, such as frequency means and percentages. Relationships between the research variables were determined using Pearson correlations (r). Tables and charts were used to display the quantitative data.

Qualitative data analysis adopted a thematic approach through textual analysis. Interview transcripts were transcribed and comprehensively read for data comprehension. Microsoft Excel facilitated efficient data organization. Textual analysis identified themes, patterns, and categories. The coding process grouped and assessed data based on study priorities and analysis questions. Sub-themes or subcategories were explored. Identified categories and subcategories organized data into meaningful units, such as phrases or sentences. Qualitative results were presented through descriptive prose (narratives) for a detailed and compelling account of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research yielded a total of 289 distributed instruments, with a notable response rate of 83.8% across various respondent categories: 77.2% for principals, 84.5% for class teachers,

and 89.7% for student leaders. This response rate, exceeding the recommended threshold of 75% for on-paper surveys, underscores the reliability of the collected data, allowing for robust conclusions and recommendations related to motivation and satisfaction among the participants. The demographic analysis revealed a gender imbalance, with 64.3% of respondents identifying as male. Age distribution showed a predominance of mid-career professionals, primarily aged 36 to 45 years (53.1%), indicating an experienced faculty. Furthermore, the majority held degrees (52.0%), which may influence their perspectives on multicultural education, while employment tenure also varied, with 44.9% having 11 to 15 years at their current schools, providing valuable insights into institutional dynamics and culture.

Descriptive Statistics for School Culture in the Promotion of Intercultural Competence

The results were as follows. Values, beliefs, and habits are formed on the knowledge of the school community. The responses indicate that a majority of the respondents, 71(72.4%), agree or strongly agree that values, beliefs, and habits are formed based on the knowledge of the school community. The mean score is 3.87, with a standard deviation of 1.06. This suggests that most respondents believe the school's knowledge significantly influences the formation of values, beliefs, and habits, although there is some variability, indicating differing levels of agreement among respondents. This aligns with Widodo's (2019) study, which highlights that the establishment of a comprehensive education curriculum is based on the bottom-up awareness and will of the school community, forming the foundation for values, beliefs, and habits.

The school often hosts sporting events for students from all backgrounds. A significant proportion of respondents, 74(75.5%), agree or strongly agree that the school often hosts sporting events for students from all backgrounds. The mean score is 3.92, with a standard deviation of 0.94. This reflects a strong consensus that the

school is active in organizing inclusive sporting events, promoting interaction among students from diverse backgrounds. This is supported by Widodo (2019), who emphasizes the role of school culture in promoting equality and interaction among students from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups through activities like sports participation.

The school's culture encourages staff and students to communicate with one another beyond cultural and racial boundaries. The majority of respondents, 73(74.5%), agree or strongly agree that the school's culture encourages communication beyond cultural and racial boundaries. The mean score is 3.95, with a standard deviation of 1.03. This indicates a positive perception of the school's cultural environment, which fosters cross-cultural communication, although some respondents, 13(13.2%), disagree or strongly disagree, showing room for improvement. Pherali (2019) supports this by stating that an empowering school system requires establishing qualitatively varied interactions between different groups based on reciprocal respect for cultural diversity.

The school encourages the explicit teaching of principles that foster responsible behavior, such as self-control and dispute resolution. A large proportion of respondents, 71(72.4%), agree or strongly agree with the statement, with a mean score of 4.02 and a standard deviation of 1.05. This high level of agreement suggests that the school is perceived to be effectively promoting responsible behavior through explicit teaching of principles like self-control and dispute resolution. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) highlight that explicit instruction of values like self-control and conflict resolution fosters responsible behavior, supporting this finding.

The goal of the social-emotional learning component of the curriculum is to instill values like compassion, tolerance, and respect for others. The responses show that 74(75.5%) of the respondents agree or strongly agree with this statement. The mean score is 4.00, with a standard deviation of 0.95, indicating strong

support for the social-emotional learning component of the curriculum. This reflects a positive view of the curriculum's goal to instill important values such as compassion, tolerance, and respect for others. Hermino (2017) and Taka (2020) both emphasize the role of the school curriculum in forming social attitudes and instilling values like respect for others, compassion, and tolerance, which aligns with this finding.

Overall, the results suggests that respondents have a positive perception of their school culture, particularly in terms of forming values based on community knowledge, hosting inclusive sporting events, encouraging cross-cultural

communication, teaching responsible behavior, and promoting social-emotional learning. The mean scores indicate a high level of agreement with these statements, although the variability in responses suggests that there is still some room for improvement in certain areas. The findings imply that a supportive and inclusive school culture plays a crucial role in promoting intercultural competence among students. These findings align with a study by Nyaga et al. (2018), which explored the impact of school culture on students' intercultural competence in Kenya. Similar to the current findings, Nyaga et al. found that schools that prioritize values of inclusivity and mutual respect contribute significantly to students' ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for School Culture in the Promotion of Intercultural Competence

Statement	SD N(%)	D N(%)	N N(%)	A N(%)	SA N(%)	Mean	Std Dev
Values, beliefs, and habits are formed on the knowledge of the school community	3(3.1%)	10(10.2%)	14(14.3%)	41(41.8%)	30(30.6%)	3.87	1.06
The school often hosts sporting events for students from all backgrounds	1(1.0%)	9(9.2%)	14(14.3%)	47(48.0%)	27(27.6%)	3.92	0.94
The school's culture encourages staff and students to communicate with one another beyond cultural and racial boundaries	1(1.0%)	12(12.2%)	12(12.2%)	39(39.8%)	34(34.7%)	3.95	1.03
The school encourages the explicit teaching of principles that foster responsible behavior, such as self-control and dispute resolution	1(1.0%)	10(10.2%)	16(16.3%)	30(30.6%)	41(41.8%)	4.02	1.05
The goal of the social-emotional learning component of the curriculum is to instill values like compassion, tolerance, and respect for others	2(2.0%)	5(5.1%)	17(17.3%)	41(41.8%)	33(33.7%)	4.00	0.95

Cultivating Inclusion: Principals' Strategies for Preventing Stereotyping and Discrimination in Schools

The principals were asked to indicate how they prevent stereotyping and discrimination in their school, and the some of the main responses were as follows.

Principal 9

I promote respect, empathy, and understanding through anti-bias education and inclusive language policies. (22/05/2024)

Principal**40**

I provide professional development opportunities for staff to enhance cultural competence and address unconscious biases. (30/05/2024)

The responses show that the responses provided by secondary school principals demonstrate proactive measures taken to prevent stereotyping and discrimination within their schools. Principals prioritize creating an inclusive and respectful environment through various strategies, including anti-bias education and inclusive language policies (Principal 9). These responses indicate a commitment to promoting equity and social justice within the school community, ultimately fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Principals' Strategies for Promoting Cross-Cultural Interactions among Students

The responses provided by secondary school principals illustrate a variety of strategies employed to promote cross-cultural interactions among students, fostering a sense of unity and appreciation for diversity within the school community. Principals prioritize creating opportunities for cultural exchange and appreciation through multicultural events, such as food festivals and cultural showcases, and by

establishing cross-cultural clubs or affinity groups where students can explore their identities and heritage. Additionally, cooperative learning activities and group projects facilitate collaboration and communication among students from different backgrounds, while buddy or mentorship programs foster friendships and mutual support. These strategies collectively contribute to creating a vibrant and inclusive school environment where students can learn from and celebrate each other's cultural perspectives.

Correlations between School Culture and Intercultural Competence among Students

The correlation analysis reveals a strong and statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.625$, $p < 0.01$) between school culture and intercultural competence among students. This indicates that as the quality of the school culture improves, students' intercultural competence also tends to increase. The strong positive correlation indicates that inclusive practices, cultural sensitivity, and respect for diversity characterize a positive and inclusive school culture that supports the growth of intercultural competence in students. Schools that place a high priority on fostering an environment where students from diverse backgrounds feel valued and respected are more likely to develop students' abilities to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. These findings align with a related study conducted by Muthoni *et al.* (2019), which found that schools with a strong emphasis on promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity tend to have students who exhibit higher levels of intercultural competence. This suggests that efforts to improve school culture, such as implementing multicultural education programs and promoting cultural exchange activities, can have positive implications for enhancing students' intercultural competence and preparing them for success in an increasingly diverse world.

Table 2: Correlations between School Culture and Intercultural Competence among Students

		School Culture	Intercultural Competence among Students
School Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.625**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	98	98
Intercultural Competence among Students	Pearson Correlation	.625**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	98	98

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Intercultural Competence among Students

As shown in Table 3, the results were as follows. The statement I am interested in learning about different cultures. Out of 98 respondents, 70 (71.4%) agree or strongly agree with the statement, indicating a strong interest in learning about different cultures. The mean score of 3.78 with a standard deviation of 1.29 suggests a high level of interest, although some variability exists among respondents. This suggests that a significant majority value cultural learning. This aligns with Lai, Chen, and Zhu (2019), who found that cultural self-awareness and knowledge are essential components of intercultural competence. The statement I feel comfortable interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. A total of 65 (66.3%) respondents agree or strongly agree with this statement, reflecting a general comfort in cross-cultural interactions. The mean score of 3.66 and standard deviation of 1.19 indicate that while the majority is comfortable, there is a notable minority who may not feel as comfortable, highlighting an area for potential improvement in fostering intercultural comfort. This finding is consistent with Wan Jaafar, Mustapha, and Ariffin (2018), who noted the positive impact of multicultural education programs on students' ability to interact with people from different cultures.

I have knowledge about the customs and traditions of different cultures recorded the following results. According to the data, 75 (76.5%) respondents agree or strongly agree that they possess knowledge about different cultural customs and traditions. The mean score of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 1.15 indicate a high level of cultural knowledge, reflecting well on the respondents' awareness and understanding of diverse cultural practices. This supports the findings of Yashima, et al. (2018), who

emphasized the role of language learning in enhancing cultural knowledge.

I understand the importance of cultural sensitivity in communication and interactions. The responses show that 71 (72.4%) respondents agree or strongly agree with the importance of cultural sensitivity, with a mean score of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 1.08. This strong consensus underscores the critical importance of cultural sensitivity in communication, which is essential for effective and respectful interactions. Ansen and Ngidi (2020) also found that community engagement programs significantly enhance students' intercultural competence and cultural sensitivity.

I feel confident in my ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. A total of 68 (69.4%) respondents agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicating a high level of confidence in their communication abilities across cultures. The mean score of 3.79 and standard deviation of 1.16 reflect a generally positive self-assessment, although there is some room for growth in confidence levels. This finding is similar to Amoah (2019), who reported that study abroad programs improve students' confidence in interacting with people from different cultures.

I am able to adjust my communication style to better suit different cultural contexts. According to the data, 72 (73.5%) respondents agree or strongly agree that they can adjust their communication style, indicating strong adaptability in cross-cultural contexts. The mean score of 3.95 and standard deviation of 1.19 suggest that most respondents feel capable of modifying their communication to suit different cultural norms. This aligns with the findings of Malinga et al. (2018), who noted improved teaching practices and intercultural competence among students in teacher education programs.

I respect the cultural practices and beliefs of people from different cultural backgrounds. The responses for this statement show that 77 (78.6%) respondents agree or strongly agree with this statement, demonstrating a high level of respect for diverse cultural practices and beliefs. The mean score of 3.92 and standard deviation of 1.20 indicate a strong and positive attitude towards cultural respect. This finding is consistent with Ezeudu (2018), who highlighted the positive impact of multicultural education programs on primary school students' appreciation of cultural differences.

I recognize the value of cultural diversity and the contributions it brings to society. The results for this statement show that, a total of 71 (72.4%) respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, with a mean score of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 1.20. This reflects a strong recognition of the positive contributions of cultural diversity, highlighting the value placed on diversity by the respondents. This supports the research by Makura et al. (2021), who found that community-based programs improved cross-cultural communication and cooperation among students. I am aware of my own cultural biases and try to avoid making assumptions based on them. The results for this statement show that, 68 (69.4%) respondents agree or strongly agree that they are aware of their cultural biases and try to avoid

making assumptions. The mean score of 3.79 and standard deviation of 1.21 indicate a good level of self-awareness, though some respondents may still need to work on recognizing and mitigating their biases. This finding is in line with Mulwa et al. (2021), who reported the effectiveness of multicultural education programs in promoting self-awareness among secondary school students in Kenya.

I am sensitive to the feelings of people from different cultural backgrounds and try to understand their perspectives. The results for this statement show that, 69 (70.4%) respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, with a mean score of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 1.26. This indicates a strong level of empathy and effort to understand diverse perspectives, although the variability suggests that this is an area where continuous improvement is needed. This is consistent with the findings of Lai, Chen, and Zhu (2019), who emphasized the importance of empathy and perspective-taking in developing intercultural competence.

The data indicates a generally positive attitude towards intercultural competence among respondents. They show a high level of interest in cultural learning, comfort in interactions, respect for cultural practices, and recognition of the value of diversity. However, the variability in some responses highlights areas for further development, such as improving intercultural comfort, confidence in communication, and awareness of cultural biases.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Intercultural Competence among Students

Statement	SD (%)	N	D (%)	N	NN (%)	AN (%)	SA (%)	N	Mean	Std Dev
I am interested in learning about different cultures.	10 (10.2%)	8	8 (8.2%)	10	10 (10.2%)	36 (36.7%)	34 (34.7%)		3.78	1.29
I feel comfortable interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds	8 (8.2%)	9	9 (9.2%)	16	16 (16.3%)	40 (40.8%)	25 (25.5%)		3.66	1.19
I have knowledge about the customs and traditions of different cultures	6 (6.1%)	6	6 (6.1%)	11	11 (11.2%)	36 (36.7%)	39 (39.8%)		3.98	1.15
I understand the importance of cultural sensitivity in communication and interactions	5 (5.1%)	4	4 (4.1%)	18	18 (18.4%)	36 (36.7%)	35 (35.7%)		3.94	1.08
I feel confident in my ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds	6 (6.1%)	9	9 (9.2%)	15	15 (15.3%)	38 (38.8%)	30 (30.6%)		3.79	1.16
I am able to adjust my communication style to better suit different cultural contexts	7 (7.1%)	5	5 (5.1%)	14	14 (14.3%)	32 (32.7%)	40 (40.8%)		3.95	1.19
I respect the cultural practices and beliefs of people from different cultural backgrounds	9 (9.2%)	4	4 (4.1%)	8 (8.2%)	8 (8.2%)	42 (42.9%)	35 (35.7%)		3.92	1.20
I recognize the value of cultural diversity and the contributions it brings to society	7 (7.1%)	6	6 (6.1%)	14	14 (14.3%)	31 (31.6%)	40 (40.8%)		3.93	1.20
I am aware of my own cultural biases and try to avoid making assumptions based on them	8 (8.2%)	7	7 (7.1%)	15	15 (15.3%)	36 (36.7%)	32 (32.7%)		3.79	1.21
I am sensitive to the feelings of people from different cultural backgrounds and try to understand their perspectives	10 (10.2%)	7	7 (7.1%)	12	12 (12.2%)	38 (38.8%)	31 (31.6%)		3.74	1.26

Cultivating Community and Growth: School-Based Team-Building and Teaching Styles

Using interview schedules, the student leaders were asked to indicate how their school fosters a sense of community and belonging through team-building activities. The responses were as provided below.

Student No 12:

Our school organizes orientation programs and icebreaker activities at the beginning of the school year to help new students integrate into the school community and build relationships with their peers. (20/05/2024)

Student No 23:

We have regular team-building exercises and challenges during physical education classes,

promoting teamwork, cooperation, and camaraderie among students. (22/05/2024)

The responses from student leaders highlight the diverse ways in which their school fosters a sense of community and belonging through team-building activities. From orientation programs and icebreaker activities to regular team-building exercises during physical education classes, spirit weeks, and student-led community service projects, each initiative plays a vital role in promoting camaraderie, unity, and civic engagement among students. Additionally, annual retreats and leadership workshops provide opportunities for students to strengthen bonds and develop essential leadership skills through team-building games and activities.

In parallel, student leaders acknowledge the positive impact of their school's teaching style on their academic growth. Emphasizing critical thinking, problem-solving, hands-on learning, and collaboration, the teaching approach encourages independence, engagement, and skill development among students. These combined efforts contribute to creating a supportive learning environment that nurtures both personal and academic development, fostering well-rounded and empowered students.

Regression Outputs

From the results of the regression analysis we can infer that the model explains a fairly large share of the variability in intercultural competence among students with construct value of $R\text{-sq} = 0.53$ percent of the respondents are informed about luxury apartments for rent in their target locations based on the phone interviews conducted. The evaluation of the intercultural competence that was made in the framework of the present study indicates that the chosen predictors explain 3% of the variability among the students. Further the adjusted R-squared value came to be 0.518 it means that the goodness of fit in the model does not reduce with the increased number of predictors' adjustment.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.730 ^a	.533	.518	.54740

a. Predictors: (Constant), School Culture, Prejudice Reduction, Equity Pedagogy
Furthermore, the results of the ANOVA test reveal that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(3, 94) = 35.769$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that at least one of the predictor variables significantly predicts intercultural competence among students. This suggests that the combined influence of school culture, prejudice reduction efforts, and equity pedagogy on students'

intercultural competence is substantial. The regression coefficients table reveals the nature of the connections between the independent variables; Equity Pedagogy, Prejudice Reduction, and School Culture and the dependent variable Intercultural Competence among Students. Each coefficient is the difference in the dependent variable for one unit difference in the predictor variable, while controlling the other variables.

Table 5: Analysis of Variances (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.153	3	10.718	35.769	.000 ^b
	Residual	28.167	94	.300		
	Total	60.320	97			

a. Dependent Variable: Intercultural Competence among Students

b. Predictors: (Constant), School Culture, Prejudice Reduction, Equity Pedagogy
School Culture emerges as a significant predictor of Intercultural Competence among Students ($\beta = 0.228$, $p = 0.029$). This implies that schools with a positive and inclusive culture, characterized by

respect for diversity and cultural awareness, tend to have students with higher levels of intercultural competence. The findings highlight the importance of cultivating a supportive school environment that values diversity and promotes cultural understanding in enhancing students' ability to navigate intercultural interactions effectively.

Table 6: Beta Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.146	.453		-.322	.748
Equity Pedagogy	.465	.119	.432	3.893	.000
Prejudice Reduction	.185	.130	.149	1.428	.157
School Culture	.350	.158	.228	2.212	.029

a. Dependent Variable: Intercultural Competence among Students

CONCLUSIONS

Additionally, the examination of school culture's impact on intercultural competence reinforces the commitment of educators to various strategies aimed at reducing prejudice and promoting inclusivity. Principals' inclusive teaching practices and schools' initiatives to combat stereotyping and discrimination, as highlighted by Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, contribute to fostering cross-cultural interactions. Student leaders and students emphasize teachers' efforts to make lessons relatable to diverse cultures and address discrimination. The significant positive correlation between prejudice reduction and intercultural competence emphasizes the crucial role of educational institutions in creating an environment conducive to promoting diversity and understanding. These findings underscore the importance of ongoing efforts to reduce prejudice and enhance intercultural competence, ultimately fostering inclusivity and social cohesion within educational settings in Kenya.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should provide regular professional development programs focused on intercultural competence, inclusive teaching practices, and prejudice reduction strategies.

These programs should equip teachers with skills to make lessons relatable to diverse cultural contexts, address discrimination, and foster cross-cultural understanding among students.

Schools should implement initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity, such as cultural exchange programs, anti-discrimination campaigns, and workshops on stereotyping and bias. These efforts should involve principals, teachers, student leaders, and students to create a cohesive and supportive school culture.

Educational institutions and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers should develop and enforce policies that promote inclusivity and penalize discriminatory practices. Regular assessments and feedback from students, teachers, and parents can help monitor progress and ensure accountability in fostering intercultural competence.

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