Breaking the Silence: Revealing the limits of Preschool Teachers' Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC) in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Background: Within the framework of the new Saudi Vision 2030, the education system is keen on developing Early Childhood (EC) curricula to meet the needs of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, in addition to preparing teachers to be the main driving forces in this field. To achieve these strategic goals, the professional development of teachers has taken the lead in terms of their continuous professional achievements.

Purpose: The recent study tended to explore the promotion of Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC) of teachers in preschool institutions in different sectors in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) include public, private and international.

Method: In the current study, (n=300) of preschool female teachers, who had experience teaching children from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, participated voluntarily by filling out the exploratory questionnaire. It was designed on a five-point Likert scale. The credibility of the scale and the validity of the questionnaire were ascertained, and the content for which it was designed verified in terms of the purposes of the current investigation.

Results: The results revealed that preschool female teachers in the private preschool settings have a higher level of CLC compared to those who were teaching in public and international preschools in KSA. In the private sector, preschool female teachers showed create abilities to provide culturally responsive environments for diverse students, applying various communication styles, and showing proper attitudes and values toward diversity.

Implication: The current study provided key implications for policy makers regarding the promotion of CLC for all teachers, particularly preschool in government settings in KSA. It contributed to revealing the cultural awareness of preschool teachers' values and attitudes toward diversity.

Keywords:
communication styles, attitudes, values, cultural resources.

1. Introduction

Recently, the education system in KSA has tended to integrate educational policies and cultural considerations into field practices at the institutional level in order to support diversity and develop cultural competence among learners in the classroom. With the tremendous development of the education system, which is in line with the realization of the new Saudi Vision 2030, came the growing interest in the advancement of multicultural education. Multicultural education contributes to raising students' understanding of and respect for others from different cultural groups, and prevents the spread of stereotypes acquired whether from home, society or the media (Ford, 2014). Previous studies have confirmed that cultural teacher preparation programs require a multicultural educational course design, in which teachers gain CLC facilitating a smoothly cultural immersion (Salmona et al., 2015 Salmona et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2019).

It cannot be denied what the world witnessed in the KSA recently in the rapid development of the education system, as interest has increased in expanding the opening of private and international schools, improving the teaching of modern international curricula in line with Saudi culture and empowering women (Allehyani, 2022; Allehyani & Alfayez,2022). In addition, the new Vision 2030 aims to diversify the economic sector, modernize the education system and develop tourism in the Kingdom (Aldegether, 2020). The Saudi National Curriculum Framework provides programs that ensure raising children's awareness of different cultures, which helps them at an early age to acquire a flexible and conscious mindset (Ministry of Education, 2018). In line with the continuing cultural and linguistic diversity of children residing in the Kingdom, the need to develop teacher preparation programs for special teaching and learning skills to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of diverse students has increased. In a more precise sense, there has been an increasing need to achieve CLC for teachers' institutions in the Kingdom, whether in the public or private sectors, to achieve the desired results for education in accordance with international standards of quality.

The concept of CLC has witnessed an obvious development that is summarized as a response to the significant demographic changes that have occurred in

many developed countries over the past decade (Salmona et al., 2015). Cultural competence in teaching is a culturally relevant pedagogy that tended to improve students' knowledge, skills and interaction (Salmona, Partlo, Kaczynski, & Leonard, 2015; Williams, Williams, Jones-Fosu & Carter, 2019; Kuipers, 2020). In school settings, teachers' CLC includes identical and consistent attitudes, behaviors, and policies that enable them to function effectively (King, Sims, & Osher, 2007; Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2019). A previous study recommended that in order to make progress in supporting a culturally diverse group of professionals, it is necessary to provide comprehensive training of trainers, longitudinal evaluations of cultural interventions and identification of best practices (Brottman, Char, Hattori, Heeb, & Taff, 2020). It is worth noting that previous studies on the extent to which preschool female teachers achieve CLC are almost non-existent in KSA, in addition to the existence of little research internationally on this subject. Hence, the current research intends to reveal the CLC of female teachers in pre-school Relevant literature

1.1 Culturally responsive learning environment

Certainly, providing a welcoming environment for all students through achieving intercultural competence for them in the classroom is a prerequisite for the success of the educational process. Cultural resources include materials and symbols, knowledge and values, human networks and interactions with others within a specific cultural context (Shimbo & Tendo, 2022). Developing the environment with cultural resources is one of the most important factors influencing building cognitive diversity and cultural acceptance among children (Shimbo, 2022; McMillion, 2022). Previous studies emphasized the importance of equitable access to resources for all students including fair representation as a necessity in the school community (Goodwin, 2019). Another study explored educators' passion and commitment to meeting the needs of cultural diversity for students, who have shown a strong appreciation for the diversity in classrooms and the many ways they enrich and benefit classroom learning (Bonner, Warren, & Jiang, 2018). Sinclair (2019) recommended that to increase social and cultural awareness, time should be devoted to critically examining concepts in line with values, away from prejudices and stereotypes, and accepting perspectives on issues relevant to the children, families and communities.

Teachers should examine the contents of educational resources to ensure their suitability for culturally diverse children and their impact on achieving principles of justice, respect and fairness for all students without any form of racial, sexual or cultural bias. They can raise children's awareness by preparing the classroom environment respectful of ethnic diversity, for instance, selecting books or posters and images that engage children and their families (BaAkhlag & Allehyani, 2021). Filipović (2018) study on content analysis of children's books found distinct gender patterns, including underrepresentation of female characters. More interestingly, findings indicate that teachers showed a lack of awareness of gender stereotypes and give limited importance to the representation of gender in children's books (Filipović ,2018). Previous studies by Kahraman (2016) showed that the most frequently used method of teaching culture is through the textbook, and that teachers rarely provide additional materials. These teachers expressed their desire and positive attitudes to teach culture in the language class, but they face many obstacles, including lack of time to teach culture, overburdening them with the specific curricula, in addition to their unfamiliarity with foreign cultures (Kahraman, 2016).

Additionally, responsive cultural approaches are crucial factors in influencing teacher performance. Media is a cultural resource that shapes children's attitudes, practices, and beliefs toward themselves and their communities by directing their thoughts toward critical thinking in popular theories of the physical and social worlds (Spinner, Cameron, & Tenenbaum,2022). Interestingly, Spinner et al. (2022) studied gender stereotyping in magazine contents and found that boys were less likely to buy magazines, which on average confirms that boys are less involved in reading than girls. In addition, teachers can add more spaces for dramatic play, create exploration areas for self-portraits, such as painting/drawing, making crafts, and allocate space for family photos, stories, and ethnic and cultural artifacts (BaAkhlag & Allehyani, 2021). A contemporary study in KSA by Allehyani (2022) found that there are significant differences between the diversity of curricula in terms of teaching strategies and assessment methods that meet the diverse needs of learners from different cultural backgrounds. The results demonstrated the interest of the preschool environment in cultural and linguistic diversity in terms of the application of culturally responsive curricula offered to ethnically and culturally diverse

children, which were implemented more than in public preschool settings (Allehyani, 2022). Kuipers (2022) stated that it is necessary to develop curricula by designing culture-based lessons, share curriculum building with students, develop relationships with students and their families, help them gain knowledge of other cultures through recognition of cultural identities, and facilitate communication between students and their families. This can be achieved by providing equitable and accessible resources such as sports and other extracurricular activities, higher education opportunities, nutritious foods, and materials translated for students and parents in their second language (Goodwin, 2019).

It is worth noting that the implementation of a specific strategy on cultural grounds that ensures no bias towards a specific culture is one of the requirements to achieve an appropriate multicultural environment. Persona dolls strategy is an anti-social education against prejudice created to represent another child in a class or community (Domingues, 2019). In order to achieve sustainability in education, a range of social and cultural learning methods must be implemented providing better conditions for all children (Kissinger, 2017; Domingues, 2019; Domingues, 2021). Prior research dealt with the strategy of storytelling with persona dolls, which turned out to be a powerful tool used in teaching children to combat prejudice, and encourage them to respect the identity of others while communicating with those around them, which achieves effective environmental sustainability (Kissinger, 2017; Domingues, 2019). In confirmation of this, educators' intercultural competence can be significantly increased through professional training that leads to develop teachers' awareness of their culture, identity and beliefs, and reduce their prejudices (Hanover Research, 2014; Fanous, Wiersma-Mosley, Herold, Timby, McNally, & Flack, 2020).

1.2 Communication styles

Without doubt, teachers' communication patterns are considered as the basic and influential pillars in achieving CLC for education centers, as they affect the learning of children despite the diversity of their cultures, ethnicities and languages. Language is an integrated system that includes complex communications, whether spoken or non-verbal and may be gestural, or written to express thoughts and feelings (Oxford &Gkonou, 2018). For teachers to have the skills to become culturally competent,

they must effectively understand verbal and nonverbal responses, language, and cues to communicate effectively with others of different backgrounds and serve them according to their needs (Goodwin, 2019). Teachers who advance in cultural competence are better able to demonstrate development in skills related to increased level of awareness and self-reflection to be free of personal biases. Previous research has shown that the more culturally aware teachers are of their values and beliefs, the more comfortable they will feel in communicating with children's families, which leads them to learn about the different cultural and ethnic contexts of those families (Graue, Whyte & Delaney, 2014; Summer, 2014; Porterfield &Scott-Little, 2019).

In the same vein, to strengthen CLC for teachers, professional support should be provided to help them implement the cultural practice of students who have special requirements (Tarant & Huerta 2015). It is worth noting that communication problems are more obvious in countries where cultural differences are high, while teachers do not adequately understand students with different cultural backgrounds (Karacabey, Ozdere, & Bozkus, 2019). Accordingly, a serious re-examination of the differences arising from these cultural diversities is an important principle to consider when setting up learning and teaching environments (Karacabey et al., 2019). In addition, there was not enough training for teachers to enable them to understand students from different groups and teach in these classes (Karacabey et al., 2019). Wells (2008) emphasized that in a multicultural context, there is an urgent need to qualify teachers so that they can understand the problems of multicultural learners, communicate them properly, and help them achieve their academic success. The CLC of teachers has a direct impact on the educational process, which is demonstrated through their skills in communicating effectively with diverse students (Hanover Research, 2014).

1.3 Attitudes and values

Crucially, teachers should have culturally responsive attitudes in the classroom. Cultural competence is a long-term developmental process, and that awareness emerged through their practices, but were unsure about the effectiveness of their role and cultural standing, their personal and professional beliefs, and personal interactions (Sinclair,2019). Teachers' attitudes and practices towards cultural diversity can be translated by adopting different

approaches that meet the needs and values of these students (Middelkoop et al., 2017). The concept of attitude in education consists of the source of knowledge, ideology, and values that guide teachers in their educational practices (Middelkoop, Ballafkih, & Meerman, 2017). There are aspects of culture that are classified as unconscious or invisible, such as attitudes and values, that are the strongest because, in general, they undisputedly lead conscious aspects (Oxford &Gkonou, 2018). There are multiple and overlapping aspects of culture that are visible (e.g. food, ceremonies, and clothing) are part of the visual end of cultural practices, while there is a deeper aspect to invisible, often unconscious feelings, such as beliefs or attitudes (Oxford &Gkonou, 2018).

Teachers' cultural awareness shapes their teaching attitudes and values toward diversity. Raising the level of cultural awareness can shape all instructional decisions that a teacher makes, including curricula and student assessment, which ultimately lead to students' cultural and academic development (Redding, 2019). Interestingly, a previous study found that when translating teachers' attitudes into classroom practices, it was clear that they did not take diversity into account (Middelkoop et al., 2017). This result can be justified by teachers' limited knowledge and skills about multicultural education, as well as the lack of time to learn with the increased educational burdens they face in schools. Likewise, many scholars argued that when the profile of the teacher and the culture of the students are not taken into account, it may lead to conflict, misunderstandings and missed learning opportunities (Antón-Solanas, Huércanos-Esparza, Hamam-Alcober, Vanceulebroeck, Dehaes, Kalkan, & Tambo-Lizalde, 2021). Moreover, other invisible cultural dimensions are beliefs and values, including but not limited to, conflict issues about the role of women in the patriarchy in some societies, and generational perspectives on women's empowerment, which differ according to religious and cultural beliefs (Oxford & Gkonou, 2018). Regarding cultural values in the Saudi context, the study found that parents engage in reading and discussing textual content in books infrequently in relation to the reinforcement of diverse viewpoints (such as gender) with their children (Allehyani, 2016). At about the age of eight, children move on to the third stage, where they are taught topics associated with gender stereotypes.

Children are exposed to this topic, they are taught by educators how to behave and be treated and what to expect from others, based on relevant gender assumptions (Lillegård, Trondsen, & Boks, 2021). Implementation of the educational intervention strategy such as story time in teaching social justice has a positive effect on the development of preschool-aged children, which encourages them to express their individual thoughts more deeply and critically (Hawkins, 2014). Results from previous confirmed that we unconsciously tend to people who are most similar to us, in spite of whether this similarity occurs from gender or culture (Fan, Shepherd, Slavich, Waters, Stone, Abel, & Johnston, 2019). More precisely, the greater the proportions of female teachers found, as in Arts and Social Sciences, the more it reduces gender bias in student assessments during the teaching process (Fan et al., 2019). It is necessary for teachers, especially in EC, to educate children about the principle of justice and equality through purposeful educational activities that promote positive practices and attitudes towards cultural diversity (Allehyani, 2022). In addition, teachers should increasingly encourage students to individual self-motivation by developing their own positive and responsible attitudes towards cultural heritage and providing them with appropriate resources (Hegediš &Hus, 2021). In particular, teachers should have a greater understanding of the social and cultural backgrounds of their students, which are associated with color among student identities (Redding, 2019). All in all, it is important for teachers to apply self-evaluations; understand students' cultural contexts; implement culturally responsive teaching curricula; promote respect among students; involve their families and communities in the classroom and decision-making (Hanover Research, 2014; Policy Brief, 2017). Based on what was previously presented, the researcher recommended the necessity of paying attention to conscious practical application that is based on responding to multiple points of view, and focusing on teaching students freely and flexibility instead of power and control. The current study will focus on investigating the phenomenon in order to answer four main questions, which include the following;

1- How efficient are physical environment, materials, and resources?

2- How efficient are communication styles?

3- How efficient are values and attitudes?

4-Does there be statistically significant differences in the means responses of preschool teachers to supporting CLC due to the variables (the linguistic and cultural background, & preschool type?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participants

The total number of female teachers who were agreed to participate in the current study (n=300) in which their classroom practices were observed, beside the observation of the competence of cultural and linguistic schools' environment. The research sites for participants include: the number of female teachers at public schools (29.0%), private preschools (57.0%), and international preschools (14.0%). All those teachers were experienced in teaching children and have been working in ECH fields for many years. Most of teachers in public school who were agreed to participate in the current study were monolingual (28.3%). The number of bilingual teachers was (58.0%), and about (13.7%) of the preschool teachers were multilingual.

2.2 Assessments and Measures

The current tool in the research measures the extent of the success of ECH institutions in achieving cultural competence through the model of 'verifying CLC in the school environment'. The sub-questions in the note card are built on a 5-point Likert scale with options ranging from "daily", "weekly", "sometimes", "rarely" to "never". The authors note that five-point scales increase reliable variance in responses (Anders, 2012). There are four titles to note. First section includes demographic information (preschool type, teacher's language background, and years of teaching experience). The second part includes environmental equipment such as resources and materials. The second part contains patterns of communication with children and their families and groups of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and the last part includes teachers' attitudes and values towards the linguistic and cultural diversity of children.

2.3 Research design

The current research adopts a quantitative approach to analyzing the results by using an exploratory questionnaire to assess teachers' cultural and linguistic attitudes, values, communication style, and physical environment configuration in the learning area. The CLC of preschool

institutions (n=100) were selected randomly. This method of data collection was useful as the data collected without the researcher's direct involvement with the participants, and observing them from afar. The data collection process is organized in a procedural and well-defined manner, which was collected during three months of observations from different settings.

3. Data Analysis

This section offers a summary and analysis of the research results, including a description of the study sample's features, a description of its variables, and testing of the hypotheses.

3.1 Demographic sample characteristic

The demographic section of the questionnaire was composed of three questions; (1) years of experience; (2) the linguistic and cultural background of the teacher, (3) preschool type. These questions were analyzed through SPSS to study their statistics and frequencies. The table below shows the frequencies and percentage about the demographic sample characteristic.

Table 1
Frequencies and percentage about the demographic sample characteristic

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent%
Years of Experience	1-3 years	4	1.3
	4-6 years	74	24.7
	7-10 years	65	21.7
	More than 10 years	157	52.3
	Total	300	100.0
The linguistic and cultural background of the teacher	Bilingual	174	58.0
	Monolingual	85	28.3
	Multilingual	41	13.7
	Total	300	100.0
Preschool type	Private	171	57.0
	Public	87	29.0
	International	42	14.0
	Total	300	100.0

3.2 Internal consistency validity

As shown from Table (2), the person correlation coefficients of the sample's estimates of the dimension promoting CLC.

Table 2

Correlation coefficients between the degree of each item and the degree of the survey

Item	Physical environment, materials, & resources Correlations	Sig	Communication Styles Correlations	Sig	Values & Attitudes Correlations	Sig
1	.518**	0.003	.762**	0.000	.469**	0.009
2	.747**	0.000	.769**	0.000	.572**	0.001
3	.648**	0.000	.748**	0.000	.377*	0.040
4	.453*	0.012	.789**	0.000	0.361	0.050
5	.587**	0.001	.727**	0.000	.727**	0.000
6	.712**	0.000	.518**	0.003	.658**	0.000
7	.643**	0.000	.742**	0.000	.706**	0.000
8	.635**	0.000	.621**	0.000	.756**	0.000
9	.722**	0.000	.681**	0.000	.519**	0.003
10	.784**	0.000			.742**	0.000
11	.718**	0.000			.711**	0.000
12	.687**	0.000			.720**	0.000
13	.669**	0.000			.502**	0.005
14	.607**	0.000			.694**	0.000
15					.576**	0.001
Correlations for domain	.825**		.835**		.363*	
Alpha Cronbach coefficient	0.896		0.876		0.870	
Overall					0.726	

3. Results

Means(M) and standard deviations (SD) were assessed for each construct and related items. These items were then ranked in a descending order according to the following scale: (low=0 - 2.33, moderate= 2.34 – 3.67, & high= 3.68 – 5).

3.2 Results for the first research question

As shown in Table 3, the average degree of the mean score of teachers' belief in the importance of planning an

environment and carrying out activities that reflect cultural diversity within the community was ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.37$). This average level of value scored the first rank with higher average scores among the statements rated by teachers. In addition, teachers indicated they provide meals consisting of common traditional foods that reflect the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children and their families in preschool settings with high mean scare of ($M=2.85$, $SD=1.41$).

Table 3
Means and standard deviations for physical environment, materials, & resources

NO	Statement	M	SD	Rank	Importance level
13	I design an environment and apply activities that display the cultural diversity within children's society.	2.88	1.37	1	moderate
11	I ensure that meals consist of common traditional foods that reflect the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children and their families.	2.85	1.41	2	moderate
12	I choose the culturally diverse props for the dramatic play area (e.g., persona dolls, traditional clothing, cooking utensils, & furniture).	2.76	1.38	3	moderate
5	I read a variety of cultural books that present the different life experiences of others.	2.66	1.42	4	moderate
14	I make sure that the curriculum I teach includes unique traditional celebrations for culturally diverse children and families.	2.65	1.35	5	moderate
2	I encourage children to cook or taste a variety of foods from cultural and ethnic groups other than their own.	2.64	1.45	6	moderate
8	I plan to places where children and their families can learn about the others cultural or ethnic history.	2.63	1.42	7	moderate
9	I choose cross-cultural media sources (e.g., videos & movies) to share with children and families.	2.61	1.42	8	moderate
6	I provide opportunities for children and their families to write their own books and include them in school resources.	2.58	1.42	9	moderate
7	I encourage children and their families to share experiences, through storytelling to support an 'oral tradition' shared across many cultures.	2.56	1.40	10	moderate
4	I offer table-top toys and other play accessories representing people from different cultural and ethnic groups within the community as a whole.	2.54	1.44	11	moderate
1	I share photos that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of children and families on the iPad or interactive wall.	2.54	1.41	12	moderate
3	I provide literacy area with pictures, and story books that have diverse cultures of children and families.	2.49	1.47	13	moderate
10	I play a variety of musical instruments from many cultures.	2.46	1.39	14	moderate
Overall		2.63	1.24	-	moderate

Preschool teachers indicated that they chose culturally diverse props for the dramatic play area (such as persona dolls, traditional clothing, cooking utensils, and furniture) with a mean score of ($M=2.76$, $SD=1.38$). Results of the current study pointed to teachers reading to children a variety of cultural books that present the different life experiences of others with a mean score of ($M=2.66$, $SD=1.42$). The analyses found that teachers select cross-cultural media sources (such as videos and movies) to share with children and families with a mean score of ($M=2.61$, $SD=1.42$). In relation to printed resources, teachers reported that they share photos that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of children and families on the iPad or interactive wall with a mean score of ($M=2.54$, $SD=1.41$). Teachers encouraged children and their families to share experiences, through storytelling to support an 'oral tradition' shared across many cultures with a mean score of ($M=2.56$, $SD=1.40$). While teachers found to play a variety of musical instruments from many cultures was ranked last with a mean score of ($M=2.46$, $SD=1.39$). The overall assessment of this variable was rated by a mean of ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.24$), suggesting a moderate level of teachers' agreement.

Results for the second research question

Concerning the styles of communicating preschool teachers with children and their families, teachers used certified bilingual or multilingual interpreters to communicate with parents who may need this level of assistance., which scored a highest mean value of ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.46$). Most of teachers confirmed that they invited parents to volunteer and help in activities regardless of their ability to speak Arabic with a mean score of ($M=2.99$, $SD=1.42$), which ranked the second with a moderate importance level (see table 4). This confirms the high level of teachers' abilities to communicate with parents and children, despite their different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The mean

scores of teachers applying the language proficiency practices in a preschool setting was ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.44$).

Table 4
Means and standard deviations for communication styles

NO	Statement	M	SD	Rank	Importance level
6	I use certified bilingual or multilingual interpreters to communicate with parents who may ...d this level of assistance.	3.17	1.46	1	moderate
7	I encourage parents to volunteer in the activities regardless of their ability to speak Arabic.	2.99	1.42	2	moderate
5	I apply language proficiency practices in a preschool setting.	2.96	1.44	2	moderate
9	I seek professional intervention to assist parents who may need assistance with communication (e.g. hard of hearing, visually impaired, uneducated, illiterate, etc.).	2.94	1.40	4	moderate
8	I use alternative approaches to communicate with children and/or their parents who experience disability.	2.93	1.40	4	moderate
1	I try to learn and use keywords in the language of children who speak languages other than Arabic to communicate with them better.	2.82	1.39	6	moderate
3	I use visual aids, gestures, and physical stimuli in my interactions with children who have limited Arabic proficiency.	2.81	1.43	7	moderate
2	identify any slang used by children and their families that will help facilitate communication with them.	2.77	1.41	8	moderate
4	I ensure that official notices forward to parents are written in their native language.	2.70	1.40	9	moderate
	Overall	2.90	1.28	-	moderate

The average score of teachers who expressed their enthusiasm for learning and for using keywords in the language of children who spoke languages other than Arabic to communicate with them better was ($M= 2.82$, $SD=1.39$). Teachers were using alternative approaches to communicate with children and/or their parents who experience disability to ensure their full participation in the program with a mean score of ($M=2.93$, $SD=1.40$). Additional results showed that teachers ensured that all official notices forward to parents are written in their native language, which was ranked last with a mean of

($M=2.70$, $SD=1.40$). The overall mean score of ($M=2.90$, $SD=1.28$), suggesting a moderate level of teachers' agreement.

Results for the third research question

Table 5 depicts that all the values of a mean score of teachers' value and attitudes toward diversity awareness. Teachers explained to children that using racial, ethnic slurs or words can hurt others, which was recorded as the highest mean score of ($M=2.94$, $SD=1.43$). This result recorded the highest moderate level mean value among the statements being rated by teachers. The mean score of teachers intervened appropriately when they observed other staff or parents engaging in behaviors that display cultural sensitivity or prejudice was ($M=2.93$, $SD=1.41$). They in addition avoided imposing values that may conflict with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than their own with a mean score ($M=2.92$, $SD=1.41$).

Table 5
Means and standard deviations for preschool teachers' values and attitudes

NO	Statement	M	SD	Rank	Importance level
2	I explain to children that using racial, ethnic slurs or words can hurt others.	2.94	1.43	1	moderate
5	I intervene appropriately when I observe other staff or parents engaging in behaviors that display cultural sensitivity or prejudice	2.93	1.41	2	moderate
1	I avoid imposing values that may conflict with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than my own.	2.92	1.41	3	moderate
4	I plan activities to help children recognize and accept the differences and similarities between all people.	2.89	1.45	4	moderate
3	I make sure that books, films, and other media resources do not contain negative cultural, racial, ethnic or religious stereotypes before sharing them with children.	2.87	1.40	5	moderate

6	I understand that individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation in the dominant culture.	2.63	1.45	6	moderate
14	I include activities that are compatible with the program in terms of (mission, objectives, policies, and procedures), which enhances cultural diversity.	2.62	1.45	7	moderate
13	I respect those customs and beliefs about food and its values vary from culture to culture.	2.60	1.47	8	moderate
12	I understand that traditional methods of disciplining children are influenced by culture.	2.59	1.43	8	moderate
15	I seek information from family members that will assist me to respond effectively to the needs and preferences of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.	2.58	1.44	8	moderate
9	I appreciate that culture influences age in interactions with families (for example, placing high value on parenting decisions for older adults or the role of the oldest female in the family).	2.54	1.45	8	moderate
6	I recognize that male and female roles in the family can vary greatly between different cultures.	2.52	1.39	8	moderate
11	I understand and accept that a family's religious beliefs and folklore may influence the family's reaction and approach to a child born with a disability or in need of special health care.	2.51	1.42	8	moderate
10	Even though my professional views may differ, I accept parents as the decision makers.	2.51	1.44	14	moderate
7	I understand that family is defined differently by different cultures (e.g. extended family members, guardian).	2.50	1.44		moderate

Overall	2.68	1.26	-	moderate

Teachers reported that they avoid imposing values that may conflict with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than my own with a mean score of (M=2.92, SD=1.41). The value of the mean score of teachers selecting books and films that do not contain negative cultural, racial or religious stereotypes before sharing them with children was (M=2.87, SD=1.40). Further results revealed that teachers understand and accept that a family's religious beliefs and folklore may influence the family's reaction and approach to a child born with a disability or in need of special health care with a mean score of (M=2.51, SD=1.42). Also, few teachers reported they understand that family is defined differently by different cultures (e.g., extended family members, guardian), which was recorded with the lowest mean score of (M=2.50, SD=1.44). The overall assessment of this variable was rated by a mean of (M=2.68, SD=1.26), suggesting a moderate level of teachers' agreement.

Results for the fourth research question

The generated analyses from Table 6 presented the means and standard deviations promoting CLC according to the variables (the linguistic and cultural background of the teachers, preschool type).

Table 6
Means and standard deviations of promoting CLC according to the other variables

Variables	category		physical environment, materials, & resources	communication styles	values & attitudes
The linguistic & cultural background of the teachers	Bilingual	M	2.69	2.94	2.74
		SI	1.26	1.30	1.30
	Monolingual	M	2.46	2.70	2.50
		SI	1.16	1.22	1.15
	Multilingual	M	2.73	3.14	2.79
		SI	1.30	1.29	1.29
Preschool	Private	M	2.73	2.96	2.79

types	S I	1.28	1.33	1.32
Public	M	2.37	2.65	2.40
	S I	1.09	1.16	1.10
International	M	2.77	3.16	2.78
	S I	1.31	1.29	1.27

In order to show the significance of the statistical differences between the arithmetic averages, a triple analysis of variance was used (see table 7).

Table 7
MANCOVA for the differences in promoting CLC on other variables

Source	Dimensions	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The linguistic & cultural background of the teacher Wilks' Lambda=0.951 P-value= 0.023	physical environment, materials, & resources	4.196	2	2.098	1.382	0.253
	communication styles	1.016	2	0.508	0.311	0.733
	values & attitudes	3.627	2	1.814	1.160	0.315
Preschool type Wilks' Lambda= 0.938 P-value=0.005	physical environment, materials, & resources	9.439	2	4.719	3.109	0.046
	communication styles	3.915	2	1.957	1.200	0.303
	values & attitudes	9.166	2	4.583	2.931	0.055
Error	physical environment, materials, & resources	447.825	295	1.518		
	communication styles	481.132	295	1.631		
	values & attitudes	461.199	295	1.563		
Total	physical environment, materials, & resources	460.658	299			
	communication styles	491.212	299			
	values & attitudes	474.046	299			

As for the domains of (physical environment, materials, & resources, communication styles, values & attitudes), there was no significantly difference in relation to the linguistic and cultural background of the teachers. There were significantly differences according to preschool types. Table 8 displays the results of Scheffe's post-hoc test, which are statistically significantly different according to preschool types.

Table 8
Scheffe's test for multiple comparisons

Preschool types	Mean	Private	Public	International
Private	2.73	-	0.025*	0.875
Public	2.37		-	0.085
International	2.77			-

There was no significantly difference according to preschool types in domains teachers' communication styles, values and attitudes. However, there was a significant difference in the average value between private and public and in favor of private preschool.

4. Discussion

This contemporary study attempted to reveal the CLC of primary grade teachers in terms of preparing a culturally responsive classroom environment, the diversity in means of communication, and the attitudes and values they have towards children from diverse cultures in the KSA. To achieve this goal, the level of female teachers' possession of CLC was measured in all public, private and international preschools in order to reveal the differences in teachers' promotion of cultural diversity. To the best of my knowledge, there is no study that has examined female primary teachers' CLC in KSA, which made the results obtained from this current study unique. Interestingly, results showed that female teachers in private preschools were more proficient linguistically and culturally than female teachers in the public and international sectors. Supporting the current results by Allehyani (2022), the results show that private preschool environments have a broader application of culturally responsive curricula, which meet the needs of ethnically diverse students and provide them with an environment that is free of racism and respectful of the identities of others. This may justify the parents' interest in special education, which employs bilingual teachers and applies culturally responsive curricula. Apparently, the private sector is keen on its strategic plan to achieve its goals, which are in line with the Kingdom's Vision of cultural integration of international students into the Saudi educational system.

More to the point, the teachers encouraged the children not to be subjected to prejudice by providing the play area with cultural toys such as personal dolls that reflect their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This finding is consistent with previous findings that emphasized the need to provide the learning environment with anti-bias cultural resources (Kissinger, 2017; Domingues, 2019; Domingues, 2021). In the language activities, the teachers confirmed that they read to children a variety of books that present the life experiences of people from different cultures other than their own, such as the traditional holidays celebrated by the majority culture. The teachers

demonstrated great abilities in creating a cultural environment rich in pictures, books, and stories that encourage the exchange of different cultures between children and their families. These findings contradict Kahraman's (2016) results that teachers rarely provide additional material from textbooks to teach children from other languages and cultures. In the context of achieving the CLC of female teachers in communicating with others, the study revealed that some monolingual teachers have used bilingual or multilingual translators to communicate with parents who may need this level of assistance. In order to achieve an effective community partnership between home and school, teachers encouraged parents to volunteer in school activities regardless of their ability to speak fluent Arabic.

Furthermore, insights gained from this study contribute to understanding teachers' application of language proficiency principles and practices in the preschool setting. In special cases such as physical disability or language deficiency, teachers have used various alternative methods such as visual aids, gestures and physical stimuli to facilitate communication with children or their parents with disabilities. Additionally, the results emanating from this study suggested that demonstrated attitudes and values of fairness in terms of discouraging children from using racial and ethnic insults, by assisting them recognize that some words can hurt others. The teachers emphasized their respect for the cultural values of children and their families in terms of avoiding imposing values that might conflict with those of cultures or ethnic groups. Along the same lines, previous findings found that when teachers are highly culturally aware of their values and beliefs, they begin to feel more comfortable communicating with children's families (Graue et al., 2014; Summer, 2014; Porterfield &Scott-Little, 2019; Allehyani, 2022).

At the institutional level, teachers have included activities that are consistent with the program in terms of (mission, objectives, policies and procedures), promoting cultural diversity in children. Teachers have shown acceptance and respect for cultural gender differences, because male and female roles in the family may differ greatly between different cultures, and traditional methods of disciplining children are also influenced by culture. It is certain that the current research fills many of the large gaps in Saudi literature in the scope of cultural diversity in the education system. However, there are still some

limitations. The current study used a quantitative approach, so the use of a qualitative approach, such as the use of the interview method, may be useful in providing the study with more in-depth results. It is worth noting that the results of the current study can be generalized to female teachers at the primary level only. Further investigation is needed to explore male primary school teachers in relation to the level of CLC in KSA.

5.   Conclusion

The overarching contributions of the existing study was to reveal the level of linguistic and cultural competence of female teachers in the primary classes in the Saudi context. The results of the research focused on three components of CLC, namely: the cultural environment in the school, teachers' styles of communication, attitudes and values towards children and their families. To sum up, female preschool teachers in private settings have higher CLC scores than others in public and international preschools. This result is attributed to the schools' interest in their mission, vision and strategic objectives in promoting cultural diversity and respect and acceptance of others in the school environment regardless of ethnic differences. Theoretically, the results of the study could contribute to enriching the existing literature in CLC's understanding of preschool teachers, and the extent to which they promote the cultural diversity of children and their families in KSA.

As discussed extensively in the current literature, the promotion of CLC for teachers requires going beyond traditional views of education in KSA, by being more open to cultural diversity in the curriculum, and striving towards providing diverse and multimedia learning resources, with the purpose of bridging the gap between the private and public education sectors. Policy makers and government agencies must provide and facilitate access to diverse cultural resources for multicultural children and their families, whether in schools or public libraries as well as establishing cultural clubs that encourage children's families to integrate culturally with others. Eventually, future researchers recommend using the results of the current study to conduct a comparative study to reveal the level of language and cultural proficiency between male and female teachers in terms of gender differences, if any.

6. Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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