




EFFECT OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION ON SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND COLLABORATIVE SKILLS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

India is a treasure house of cultural heritage, reflected in its arts, literature, traditions, languages, and heritage sites. People around the world relate to its richness through tourism, festivals, yoga, classical literature. Vibrant diversity and cultural wealth best encapsulate its uniqueness and appeal at the global level. Every state in India provides an epitome of incredible cultural and linguistic diversity. Bihar, for example is famous for its rich historic contributions to education as displayed by the ancient pedagogical structures of Nalanda University and Taxila University. This study examined the effectiveness of a Culturally Responsive Instruction (CRI) package in enhancing the social, emotional, and collaborative skills of middle school students. Using a pre-test and post-test control group design, the research was conducted with a simple random sample of sixty-two students from two schools in the Gaya District of Bihar, India. Subjects in the study were given instructions to use the CRI package, which is a skill package designed to promote behavioral skills. The control group received instruction regular teaching methods. The outcomes were measured using the data collection tool, the Social, Emotional, and Collaborative Skills Scale (SECS). Statistical analysis by way of a t-test has shown that the experimental group outdid the control set significantly in the areas of social, emotional, and collaborative skills. These findings imply that CRI will better support the middle-grade learner than more traditional strategies, especially when it concerns skills related to interpersonal or intrapersonal development.

Keywords: *Culturally Responsive Instruction, Interpersonal Skills, Intrapersonal Skills, Relationship Skills*

Introduction

India is a vibrant repository of cultural heritage spanning thousands of years and articulated through arts, literature, customs, traditions, languages, artifacts, heritage sites, and the rest. Millions all around the world experience this cultural wealth in all ways: visiting India, making efforts to discover its popular tourist sites, enjoying Indian hospitality, buying its beautiful crafts and textiles, reading classical Indian literature, practicing yoga and meditation, drawing inspiration from Indian philosophy, participating in its festivals, enjoying the diversity of its music and arts, and relishing Indian cinema. This exceptional cultural and natural wealth makes India 'Incredible India' a term that best portrays its appeal and diversity (MoT, 2020). The preservation and promotion of India's cultural heritage are immensely vital for maintaining the nation's identity but also to support its economy. Apart from this, arts and culture offer tools by which individuals can prompt their identities and seek belonging as well as appreciation of diverse identities. According to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, developing cultural consciousness and expression among children enables children to build a strong sense of identity, self-esteem, and other cultures.

Indian arts, classically in Bharatanatyam and Kathak, the music traditions of Hindustani and Carnatic, and so on in visual arts including miniature painting, let children appreciate their culture along with intellectual development since the beginning of school years (GoI, 2020). Therefore, languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, and regional languages like Maithili and Bhojpuri have relevance in preserving linguistic diversity to help sustain India's cultural heritage. These dialects, along with their resultant art forms such as literature, plays, music, and films, encapsulate and preserve the essence of their respective cultures. Bihar, a culturally rich state in India, is the epitome of India's distinctiveness and vibrancy. The state celebrates a wealth of festivals like *Chhath Puja* with genuine frenzy, which really presents a picture of the tradition and spiritualism of its people.

Culturally Responsive Learning Environment

The CRI as “a student centred approach to teaching in which the students’ unique cultural strengths are identified and nurtured to promote student achievement and a sense of well-being about the student’s cultural place in the world” CRI takes the background, interests, and experiences into consideration for classroom teaching (Matthew Lynch, 2011).

Despite the growing cultural diversity in classrooms, educators persist in employing traditional pedagogical strategies and techniques that were prevalent in less diverse educational environments concerning culture, economics, and language. Students require educators who understand their students, the content to be taught, and effective teaching methodologies (e.g., Ford & Milner, 2006; Gay, 2002; Kea & Utley, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Peske & Haycock, 2006). Educators must employ research-based pedagogical approaches that address the learning, emotional, and social needs of culturally diverse students, including those with and without exceptionalities. Educators must modify their instructional approaches to accommodate students who do not benefit from existing teaching strategies (Hale, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997). In medicine, when an intervention proves ineffective—whether by failing to address the issue, exacerbating it, or demonstrating no effect—it is essential to reevaluate, revise, and customise the diagnosis, prescription, and treatment for the patient. In education, practices must be responsive to students' values, interests, needs, and cultural norms. Consequently, the primary challenge for educators is to evolve into reflective and proactive practitioners capable of establishing connections, demonstrating commitment, and embodying a caring ethos with students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Kea, Campbell - Whatley, & Richards, 2004).

A classroom tuned for cultural relevance balances the individual needs of pupils with the various cultures each brings to the classroom. Each of those is a vital part of a culturally responsive classroom, informing a set of principles for teaching that honors and respects who each student is. This tactic safeguards that all aspects of students' lives and experiences have value and are incorporated into the educational journey. This prioritizes student-centered and culture-centered learning environments.

A culturally responsive learning environment will attend to the inclusion of all students: they feel valued, represented, and understood. Dresser (1994) captured this when describing classrooms that "welcome the cultural diversity" so students, perhaps feeling "alienated," know they belong. It is also acknowledged that classroom aesthetics supports this type of environment, specifically the culturally relevant visuals and materials (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2008). This will help the students feel accepted and included and forms the bedrock of respect and trust.

Classroom management is the primary phase in a culturally responsive classroom. Researchers have found that there is a correlation between fair discipline, group assignments, and collaborative seating in terms of fostering student interaction across cultural groups (Weiner, 2003; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Intentional placements help facilitate a cross-cultural dialogue that fosters teamwork and inclusivity. Teachers must also maintain equitable disciplinary practices so that there is a sense of fairness and consistency, which helps foster a more cheerful learning atmosphere for every student.

Finally, the instructors need to adopt a reflective practice to assess the inclusivity of the classes by employing non-discriminatory displays, equal justice, and careful group planning. "Do students feel they belong?" or "Are visuals culturally representative?" are effective questions for a classroom of respect and appreciation of diversity. When students see themselves reflected in the teaching pedagogy, they are empowered, engaging both socially and academically.

A teaching approach that boosts students' brains, hearts, and social savvy by weaving in cultural and historical tidbits to share knowledge, impart skills, and shift perspectives. (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The study emphasising that CRI is useful for developing the social, emotional, and collaborative skills among the students.

“Social and emotional skills” are all about mastering the art of juggling your thoughts, emotions, and behaviour like a seasoned performer in a circus of feelings. These skills are a different breed from cognitive abilities like literacy or numeracy. They focus more on how folks handle their emotions, view themselves, and interact with others, rather than just showcasing their knack for crunching numbers or reading the fine print. It's worth noting that social and emotional skills play a pivotal role in shaping various personal and societal outcomes as we navigate through life. Social and emotional skills are the secret sauce that helps people blend into their surroundings and rack up achievements in life. Collaboration is a necessary skill that can be used to promote efficiency and productivity, as well as develop the understanding of alternate perspectives, which is vital for the progression of society. Successful collaboration is most productive when join forces with information technology, especially when it is used to achieve an educational goal.

CRI nurtures students’ social, emotional, and teamwork talents, which are absolutely essential for interpersonal and academic success. Ladson-Billings (1994) and Gay (2000) emphasize that CRI helps students develop a strong identity and sense of community. By focusing on these skills, teachers empower students to engage with others, manage emotions, and work

collaboratively in culturally diverse settings. Teacher practicing culturally relevant teaching know how to support student learning by consciously creating socialising that assists them meet the criteria of academic success, cultural savvy and a keen awareness of the world.

CRI nourishes social, emotional, and collaborative skills by using cultural and historical backgrounds that students live with, in forming activities to achieve personal growth. This practice is underlined by research conducted by Ladson-Billings in 1994 and Gay in 2000, as through it the students catch a glimpse of their own reflections in the learning material, thereby they get nourished for social awareness, emotional resilience, and self-regulation skills. Students will, therefore, be more in control of their emotions and be more confident since CRI identifies and validates them for who they are and what they bring into ones or their community.

Indeed, according to Pamela Ann Long's (2014) research she states emphatically that those teachers who are given professional progress in culturally responsive methods have a better ability to organize supportive, socially interactive environments in which the students will do well both academically and personally. Through the activities that encourage collaborations of students of different backgrounds, CRI develops empathy and appreciation toward the differences in other people's perspectives, just the skills required in a multicultural society. The findings show that CRT practices improve not only students' social and emotional skills but also their knowledge and critical thinking skills more directly aligned with the general objectives of cultural competence and critical consciousness (Long, 2014; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Developing social, emotional, and collaborative skills through CRI involves integrating strategies that respect and reflect students' diverse cultural backgrounds while fostering essential interpersonal skills.

The literature review showed limited research done using CRI as for development of skills in the students in the Indian context. Leveraging CRI is a research-based approach to develop the students' skills and competencies that integrates students' cultural backgrounds, the study intended to study its effects on the social, emotional and collaborative skills of Middle School students. The study is carrying with following objectives.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the effect of CRI in developing social skills among the students of middle school.
2. To study the effect of CRI in developing emotional skills among the students of middle school.
3. To study the effect of CRI in developing collaborative skills among the students of middle school.

Hypothesis of the Study

- 1 There exists no significant effect of CRI in developing social skills among the students of middle school.
- 2 There exists no significant effect of CRI in developing emotional skills among the students of middle school.
- 3 There exists no significant effect of CRI in developing collaborative skills among the students of middle school.

Scope of the Study: The study nubs on the activeness of CRI in developing social, emotional, and collaborative skills of middle school students of Bihar Govt. School.

Methodology: The research is a quantitative study and quasi-experimental research design was implemented as this study sets out to investigate the impact of CRIs on the development of social, emotional, and collaborative skills. Non-equivalent two group pre-test-post-test project has been shadowed for the study. CRIs and conventional method were considered as independent variables whereas social, emotional and collaborative skills were treated as dependent variables. As the instructional material a CRIs package was prepared in terms of development of social, emotional and collaboratives skills for eighth class students, the populace of the study included all the class VIII students in the district of Gaya who were studying in Bihar Government schools at middle level. In the present study, two schools were selected conveniently. The sample for this study was made up of 62 pupils using simple random sampling techniques. A breakdown showed that the experimental group was made up of 31 students, while the control group also boasted a membership of 31 students, respectively. The experimental group got the CRI treatment, while the control group stuck to the old-school methods. Prior to unleashing the research tools like SECS and CRI on unsuspecting students, we made sure to secure the school authority's consent, ticking all the boxes for ethical considerations necessary for our little experiment. The following tests were used in the study, (i) Self-developed social, emotional and collaborative skills scale (SECS) and (ii) self-designed 'Activity Package on CRI for the development of social, emotional, and collaborative skills. SECS was applied to check the effect the CRI whether these social, emotional collaborative skills completely develop or to some extent. After performing this activity, we analyze that students were able to respect their culture and environment.

Cultural Responsive Instruction Package

The activity package based on CRIs has been prepared by the research on for middle class students of Govt. of Bihar. In this package, sufficient chances have been handed out to students for the developing social, emotional and collaborative skills. For fulfillment, the research objectives the package is mainly divided into ten major aspects with various activities based on the school conducive environment *i.e. indigenous/local games, indigenous handicraft and food, social etiquette, traditional physical activities, indigenous plants, indigenous agricultural practices, awareness rally, tractional living arts forms and tractional dresses and national festival*. All activities in the CRI package were arranged in logically and as per requirement of the students' need and train to participate in the activities.

Method of Data Collection

The educators at the chosen school received a crash course in the art of wielding the CRI package. The study period stretched over a whopping 150 hours across two months of regular sessions. The classes took place right on the school grounds, courtesy of CRI. An orientation took place between the researcher and the students from the chosen schools who bravely faced the test. The students in the experimental group got a firsthand experience with the CRI package, all while the researcher kept a watchful eye. Meanwhile, the control group was treated to the classic teaching method, albeit with the same content as their experimental counterparts. At the conclusion of the experimental study, SECS was rolled out as the post-test to gauge the students' skill development outcomes. The SECS strutted its stuff in the same way for the post-test as well. The test was executed simultaneously, with research assistants in every school ready to swoop in and collect the scripts for scoring right away. The 't'-test took center stage to evaluate all the null hypotheses, courtesy of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with a flair for the 0.05 alpha level.

Results and Discussion: To study the effect of CRI in developing social skills among the students of secondary school.

Ho1- Hypothesis Testing- to study the effect of CRI in developing social skills among the middle school students.

Table 1: Scores of the Experimental Group Pre-test & Post-test of Social Skill

Group	Testing	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Experimental	Pre-test	31	67.32	8.931	11.320	30	.000	(S)
	Post-test	31	90.23	5.402				

An observation of the data displayed in table 1 shows that mean scores on the SECS, taught through CRI, on pre-test and post-test were 67.32 and 90.23 respectively, the difference being 22.91. The obtained 't' value ($t=11.320$, $p<0.01$) was highly significant. It concludes that CRI package is beneficial for developing the social skills among the class-8 students.

Table 2: Comparison of mean scores of control group on social skills during the pre-testing and the post-testing phase

Group	Testing	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Control Group	Pre-test	31	69.06	5.977	3.664	30	.001	(S)
	Post-test	31	75.84	6.558				

A perusal of table 2 clearly stated difference in mean-scores was highly significant ($t=3.664$, $p<0.01$). The significant gain in scores on the post-test reveals that conventional method of teaching was also significantly effective in developing social skills among the class-8 students.

Table 3: Comparison of social skills on post-testing mean scores of Experimental groups and Control Group

Testing	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Post-test	Experimental	31	90.23	5.402	10.830	30	.000	(S)
Post-test	Control	31	75.84	6.558				

An observation of the data displayed in table 3 shows that mean scores on the SECS, taught through CRI methods, on pre-test and post-test were 90.23 and 75.84 respectively, the difference being 14.39. The obtained 't' value ($t=10.830$, $p<0.01$) was highly significant. It concludes that CRI package is helpful for fostering interpersonal competence among the class-8 students.

Ho1- Hypothesis Testing- to study the effect of CRI in developing emotional skills among the middle school students.

Table 4: Scores of the Experimental Group Pre-test & Post-test of Emotional Skill

Group	Testing	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Experimental	Pre-test	31	61.65	6.058	14.286	30	.000	(S)
	Post-test	31	81.81	5.700				

An observation of the data displayed in table 4 shows that mean scores on the SECS, taught through CRI, on pre-test and post-test were 61.65 and 81.81 respectively. The obtained 't' value ($t=14.286$, $p<0.01$) was highly significant. It concludes that CRI package is beneficial for developing the emotional skills among the class-8 students.

Table 5: Comparison of mean scores of control group on emotional skills during the pre-testing and the post-testing phase

Group	Testing	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Control Group	Pre-test	31	59.52	7.518	4.364	30	.000	(S)
	Post-test	31	68.32	7.516				

A perusal of table 5 clearly stated difference in mean-scores was highly significant ($t=4.364$, $p<0.01$). The significant gain in scores on the post-test reveals that conventional method of teaching was also significantly effective in developing emotional skills among the class-8 students.

Table 6: Comparison of emotional skills on post-testing mean scores of Experimental groups and Control Group

Testing	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Post-test	Experimental	31	81.81	5.700	8.771	30	.000	(S)
Post-test	Control	31	68.32	7.516				

An observation of the data displayed in table 6 shows that mean scores on the SECS, taught through CRI methods, on pre-test and post-test were 81.81 and 68.32 respectively, the difference being 13.49. The obtained 't' value ($t=8.771$, $p<0.01$) was highly significant. It concludes that CRI package is beneficial for developing emotional skills among the class-8 students.

Ho1- Hypothesis Testing- to study the effect of CRI in developing collaborative skills among the middle school students.

Table 7: Scores of the Experimental Group Pre-test & Post-test of Collaborative Skill

Group	Testing	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Experimental	Pre-test	31	66.10	8.348	13.666	30	.000	S
	Post-test	31	91.52	4.618				

An observation of the data displayed in table 7 shows that mean scores on the SECS, taught through culturally CRI, on pre-test and post-test were 66.10 and 91.52 respectively. The obtained 't' value ($t=13.666$, $p<0.01$) was highly significant. It concludes that CRI package is beneficial for developing the collaborative skills among the class-8 students.

Table 8: Comparison of mean scores of control group on collaborative skills during the pre-testing and the post-testing phase

Group	Testing	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Control Group	Pre-test	31	67.71	5.711	3.764	30	.000	(S)
	Post-test	31	75.19	7.618				

A perusal of table 8 clearly stated difference in mean-scores was significant ($t=3.764$, $p<0.01$). The significant gain in scores on the post-test reveals that conventional method of teaching was also significantly effective in developing collaborative skills among the class-8 students.

Table 9: Comparison of collaborative skills on post-testing mean scores of Experimental groups and Control Group

Testing	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	't' value	df	p-value	Remarks
Post-test	Experimental	31	91.52	4.618	9.051	30	.000	(S)
Post-test	Control	31	75.19	7.618				

An observation of the data displayed in table 9 shows that mean scores on the SECS, taught through CRI methods, on pre-test and post-test were 91.52 and 75.19 respectively, the difference being 16.33. The obtained 't' value ($t=9.051$, $p<0.01$) was highly significant. It concludes that CRI package is beneficial for developing collaborative skills among the class-8 students.

Summing up, tables infer that CRI package as well as conventional method are effective in improving sample subject's social, emotional and collaborative skills but as per data analysis the CRI was better than the conventional method. Though, this package doesn't promise to improve the all type of social, emotional and collaborative skills but hopefully this package will be helpful in promoting the culturally and indigenous practices which will be helpful for develop the behavioural skills.

Findings and Conclusions

The CRI package was discovered to be quite the standout effective for developing social, emotional and collaborative skills among the middle school students. It is stated that the culturally responsive instruction or pedagogy is usefully for improving the student's achievement as well as behavioral skills. The findings are consistent with the results reported here. CRI is a transformational approach that connects the curriculum to students' cultural backgrounds and fosters the development of their social, emotional, and collaborative skills (Hoytt, Hunt, & Lovett, 2024). The CRI increases academic engagement and embodies necessary competencies for success in diverse and interconnected environments. By building inclusive spaces, CRI helps learners build empathy, teamwork, and emotional resilience as they work to dismantle systemic barriers to equitably redistributing education (Lucas & Villegas 2013; Ali & Mallepaka, 2024; Biswas, 2022). CRI concentrates on social and emotional learning as well as collaborative skills (Mori, 2023; Xu, 2024). It is emphasis on self-determination and community sovereignty in socially responsive, culturally relevant, and linguistically responsive teaching fosters cultural pride, emotional resilience, and collaborative engagement within communities, while the rigor of academics is linked with cultural relevance (Underwood, 2009; Lee, 2015). In this view There are various forms of cultural responsive instruction or pedagogy have the potential for improving student' achievement scores in terms of behavioural skills.

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