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Social and Educational Experiences of Christian School Heads in The Muslim Populated Community: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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Abstract

Aim: Inclusive practices are increasingly recognized as vital for promoting equity and social cohesion within diverse communities, where community leaders and educators play a crucial role in implementing these practices, profoundly influencing educational and social outcomes. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of community leaders and educators enacting inclusive practices in Ampatuan, Datu Abdullah Sangki, Datu Hoffer, Datu Unsay, and Mamasapano, Maguindanao del Sur, Philippines.

Methodology: This study employed a transcendental phenomenological research approach to explore the lived experiences of community leaders and educators in enacting inclusive practices within Muslim communities in the municipalities of Ampatuan, Datu Abdullah Sangki, Datu Hoffer, Datu Unsay, and Mamasapano, Maguindanao del Sur. Utilizing purposive sampling, the research selected five influential participants—comprising Christian school heads such as principals, teachers-in-charge, and officers-in-charge—who work in Muslim-majority communities, particularly within the elementary and secondary schools of the Division of Maguindanao del Sur. These participants provided insightful observations regarding the social and educational backgrounds relevant to fostering inclusivity in these settings.

Results: Three were the main themes that were present: Leadership Role, School Identity and Cultural Integration, and Inclusion Strategies. The results emphasized the importance of leadership, cultural awareness, and community involvement in encouraging inclusive practices and a feeling of belonging among the diverse members of the community.

Conclusion: This study concludes that collaborative leadership, cultural competence, and inclusive governance are vital in creating inclusive and equitable learning environments, particularly in religiously diverse settings. Christian school heads in Muslim-majority communities exemplify how adaptive leadership—through interfaith dialogue, community engagement, and inclusive policies—can promote cultural sensitivity, address discrimination, and foster social cohesion. The findings provide practical insights for educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to enhance inclusive practices and build schools that support diversity, equity, and shared values.

Keywords: *christian school heads, maguindanao del Sur, muslim populated communities, phenomenology, social and educational experiences*

INTRODUCTION

In societies where religious groups coexist, the role of school leaders becomes central in navigating the complex relationships between different cultural, religious, and social groups, both locally and internationally. For Christian school heads working in predominantly Muslim communities, their experiences are shaped by both the internal dynamics of their educational institutions and the broader social and cultural contexts in which they operate.

As the global educational landscape becomes increasingly pluralistic, understanding how school leaders navigate these complex dynamics is vital for the formulation of equitable and context-sensitive policies (Jackson, 2019). Christian school heads in Muslim-majority regions face unique challenges in balancing their responsibilities as educators, religious leaders, and community figures (Merry & Driessen, 2020). These challenges often arise from the need to uphold educational values while simultaneously respecting the cultural and religious beliefs of the



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surrounding Muslim population. For instance, in countries like Pakistan, Christian communities report experiencing limited access to education and societal discrimination, which underscores the importance of inclusive educational leadership worldwide (Anwar et al., 2021). This intersection of identity and leadership becomes a critical factor in decision-making processes related to curriculum design, school governance, and community engagement (Leithwood, 2021).

The Christian-Muslim relationship has become a burning issue of global urgency, affecting social cohesion, peaceful coexistence, and inclusive education. Religious minorities in countries such as Pakistan face challenges of forced conversion and derogatory language, compounded by reduced opportunities (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Additionally, documenting these experiences also informs the development of leadership training programs that prepare school heads to work effectively in multicultural and multifaith environments (Leithwood, 2021; Merry & Driessen, 2020).

In the Philippines, Islamic education plays a vital role in Muslim-majority areas. In this setting, Christian leaders have a unique opportunity to promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity by contextualizing their educational programs to acknowledge their Muslim students' cultural and religious heritage, as exemplified by the ALIVE program (Hassan & McGregor, 2021). Consequently, a distinctive strategy emerging from preliminary research is the use of narrative reframing and collaborative policy development as forms of adaptive leadership in religiously diverse schools. In culturally complex contexts, school heads employ storytelling rooted in shared moral values to reframe interreligious differences as common ground, fostering empathy and trust among Christian and Muslim stakeholders (Ghamrawi, 2023). They also leverage inclusive policy dialogues, where school leaders engage parents, teachers, and community members in co-creating school norms—thereby democratising decision-making and enhancing buy-in from diverse faith groups (Hayes & Derrington, 2023). These strategies—community storytelling and participatory governance—provide fresh insights into how educational leaders can strategically nurture unity and inclusivity in multifaith environments.

This study sought to fill that gap by giving voice to the leadership practices of Christian school heads in Muslim-majority regions. Also, it documents the important role of schools in building social cohesion and interfaith dialogue. Additionally, this research delved into the experiences of Christian school heads, offering valuable insights into interfaith education, multicultural leadership, and religious tolerance. The findings provide practical guidance for educators, policymakers, and religious leaders working to create inclusive educational environments in diverse communities (Andrabi, 2020). Ultimately, the study sought to inform future educational practices and policies in regions where religious plurality is a defining feature of the social landscape.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study was based on the Social Identity Theory, which was influenced by Tajfel and Turner (1986). The leadership of Christian school heads was examined through the lens of Social Identity Theory, as they navigated the tensions between their mission and the diverse Muslim community, requiring strategies for intergroup cooperation and mutual respect. This promoted social cohesion, reduced prejudice, and built bridges between religious groups.

The intercultural leadership theory underscores the importance of cultural intelligence (CQ) for leaders in multicultural and religiously plural environments. Livermore (2015) identified four key components of CQ: cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral skills. Christian school heads in Muslim-majority communities adapted their leadership styles to meet diverse needs, including adjusting schedules to accommodate Muslim religious practices while maintaining their educational needs. Cultivating cultural intelligence helped create an inclusive, educationally effective school culture.

A significant challenge for Christian school heads in Muslim-majority contexts was maintaining the school's educational mission while fostering an inclusive environment. According to Astley et al. (2017), school leaders guided their institutions while meeting the diverse educational needs of their students. Christian school heads balanced teachings with Muslim students' needs, integrating religious values and policies, and promoting inclusivity to create a supportive educational environment.

Adapting curricula to reflect the religious and cultural diversity of the student body was another important aspect of the Christian school head's role. Chunnoo et al. (2019) highlighted the need for multicultural education, where curricula were inclusive and reflective of students' diverse backgrounds. Christian school heads incorporated Islamic perspectives into the curriculum, promoted interfaith dialogue, and celebrated diversity in subjects like history, social studies, and world religions, while upholding core principles.

Transformational leadership theory provided a valuable framework for Christian school heads seeking to inspire and unite a diverse school community. According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders motivated followers

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to transcend personal self-interests for the greater good. Christian school heads used transformational leadership to foster peace, respect, and cooperation in religiously plural schools. This involved encouraging interfaith dialogues, community service projects, and religious festival celebrations, enhancing mutual understanding among students.

Objectives

This study described Christian school heads' social and educational experiences in predominantly Muslim communities. It examined how these leaders navigate the complexities of their roles within a multicultural and religiously diverse context.

The research addressed the following key questions:

1. What are the social and educational experiences on Christian school heads working in Muslim-majority communities, and how do these experiences shape their leadership practices and community engagement?
2. How do Christian school heads in Muslim-populated communities balance challenges while ensuring cultural sensitivity and inclusivity for Muslim students and families?

METHODS

Research Design

This research used a transcendental phenomenological design to investigate Christian school heads' social and educational lives in Muslim-majority societies. The transcendental phenomenological approach is best for this research because it is concerned with comprehending people's lived experiences and capturing the spirit of their personal and professional experiences in a given social setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Population and Sampling

This research utilized purposive sampling in choosing five (5) influential participants who could give insightful observations regarding the social and educational backgrounds of Christian school heads, such as principals, teacher-in-charge, and officer-in-charge who work in Muslim-majority communities within the Municipality of Ampatuan, Datu Abdullah Sangki, Datu Hoffer, Datu Unsay, and Mamasapano, particularly within the Elementary and Secondary Schools of the Division of Maguindanao del Sur. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: they must be influential in the locality, have lived and worked in the locality for at least 10 years prior to the conduct of the study, must be willing to participate and share their knowledge and perspective. Purposive sampling is preferred because it allows the researcher to select participants purposefully based on the likelihood that they can provide detailed, insightful, and contextual information that would be essential for the study goals (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Instruments

The research utilized a semi-structured interview guide as the primary data collection instrument for the study titled Social and Educational Experiences of Christian School Heads in the Muslim-Populated Community: A Phenomenological Inquiry. This semi-structured format allows for flexibility in exploring key themes while maintaining consistency across interviews, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into participants' experiences and insights. The guide included both open-ended and follow-up questions designed to elicit detailed responses regarding the unique social and educational challenges faced by Christian school leaders in predominantly Muslim communities.

The semi-structured interview approach is particularly suitable for this study as it balances structured questions and the flexibility to explore emerging topics in greater depth. This format is valuable in qualitative research, where understanding participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections is essential. The researcher tailored the questions to address various aspects of the participants' roles, including leadership practices, interfaith interactions, cultural sensitivity, and the strategies employed to foster social cohesion among Muslim students from their backgrounds. Additionally, the interviews allowed participants to share personal anecdotes and contextual insights, enriching the study's understanding of the broader educational and social dynamics (Creswell, 2013).

Data Collection

With formal permission secured from the Dean of Sultan Kudarat State University's Graduate School, the research implementation commenced. The data collection process was meticulously organized, guided by a



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researcher's manual that outlined specific steps for systematic and ethical data collection. This manual ensured consistent adherence to procedures, minimizing errors or bias (Maxwell, 2013; Silverman, 2016; Yin, 2018).

Initially, permission was obtained from the Schools Division of Maguindanao del Sur through a formal request letter endorsed by the Research Adviser. Upon receiving approval from the Maguindanao del Sur Schools Division Superintendent, formal request letters were dispatched to identified elementary and secondary schools in several municipalities. Subsequently, letters were sent to five selected participants for the academic year 2024-2025, seeking their consent to participate, accompanied by an information letter detailing the study's objectives, procedures, and participant rights.

Following consent, semi-structured interviews were administered to these five participants, who included Christian school heads working in predominantly Muslim communities within the selected schools. After the interviews, the collected data was systematically reviewed and consolidated.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted using Thematic Analysis (TA), as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), a systematic approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. This method is well-suited to the study's aim of exploring the participants' lived experiences and provides a structured framework for analyzing complex qualitative data.

Thematic Analysis involved several key phases: (1) Familiarization with the data, where the researcher immerses themselves in the data by reading through the transcripts multiple times to gain a deep understanding of its content; (2) Generating initial themes, which includes identifying preliminary patterns and themes based on significant observations and meaningful segments of the data; (3) Searching for themes, where codes were organized into broader themes and relevant data extracts were collated, allowing the researcher to identify overarching patterns in the data; (4) Reviewing themes, to ensure that themes were coherent, distinct from one another, and appropriately represent the data; and (5) Defining and naming themes, where each theme is clearly defined and named to capture its essence, ensuring that the themes accurately reflect the participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; & Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were considered when conducting the study to protect participants' rights, privacy, and well-being throughout the research process. First and foremost, informed consent was a critical element of the research. Before participating in the study, each participant was provided with a clear and detailed explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. This included information on how their responses were used, the confidentiality of their data, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Informed consent forms were distributed, and participants had to sign them before beginning the interviews (Glesne, 2015). This ensures that all participants understand their role and voluntarily agree to participate based on full disclosure of relevant information.

Additionally, cultural sensitivity was a key consideration in this study, as it involves exploring the experiences of Christian school heads working in predominantly Muslim communities. The researcher adopted a culturally sensitive approach by being mindful of the region's religious and cultural dynamics between Christian and Muslim populations. This included using appropriate language, respecting religious practices, and avoiding assumptions about participants' beliefs or experiences (Banks, 2016). By doing so, the study fostered an environment of trust and respect, essential for obtaining meaningful and honest data.

Furthermore, the study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines, with approval sought from the relevant Ethics Review Board (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019). This approval process ensures that the study meets the necessary ethical standards for research involving human participants, further safeguarding the rights and well-being of the participants involved.

Finally, the researcher ensured that the study was conducted in a manner that respected the rights of participants, ensuring that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time. The researcher also protected participants' privacy and upheld the highest standards of integrity throughout the research process.



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RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1. Social and Educational Impacts on Christian School Heads Working in Muslim-Majority Communities

<i>Probing Issue</i>	<i>Core Ideas</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Essential Theme</i>
1.1. Promoting Inclusive School Identity and Cultural Integration	Addressing discrimination Promoting interfaith understanding Inclusive practices	Cultural Awareness Communication Strategies Inclusive Teaching Practices	Fostering awareness, communication and inclusivity
1.2. Inclusive Communities through Diversity & Collaboration	Building relationships Community outreach engagement Collaborative leadership	Cultural Competence Community Engagement Inclusive Leadership Policy and Practice	Building equitable and inclusive community

Essential Theme 1: Fostering Awareness, Communication and Inclusivity

This theme is formulated by three (3) categories, namely (1) Cultural Awareness, (2) Communication Strategies, and (3) Inclusive Teaching Practices. These characterized the three (3) core ideas such as (1) Addressing discrimination, (2) Promoting interfaith understanding, and (3) Inclusive practices.

Participants implicated that the relationship between prejudice, mental health, and religious identity is crucial, with studies indicating that persisting prejudice is associated with serious mental, physical, and emotional problems. Educators must encourage tolerance and religious belief accommodation to promote a secure and accepting learning environment.

Leia: “*Kung may mga problemang ang aming mga estudyante o komunidad, ang mga elder ay tatawagin at hinihingi ang kanilang payo para sa isang maganda at maayos, ang usapin na ang bawat party ay makabenefit.*” [If problems arise among our students or community, elders are called upon and solicit their counsel for a good settlement, which both parties can benefit from.]

Christian school heads in predominantly Muslim communities play a crucial role in promoting inclusivity and equity within their schools and the broader society. Their leadership is characterized by cultural competence, active community engagement, inclusive governance, and policies that uphold fairness and respect. This theme highlights the strategies they employ to create educational environments that celebrate diversity and foster social cohesion.

To lead effectively in a multicultural setting, Christian school heads demonstrate cultural competence by understanding, respecting, and integrating local traditions and beliefs into school policies and practices. They actively seek to learn about Islamic customs, traditions, and social norms to ensure their leadership is sensitive to the needs



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of both their students and the wider community. By fostering a culture of respect, they cultivate an environment where religious and cultural differences are acknowledged and valued rather than viewed as obstacles.

Moreover, leading a diverse educational institution requires an inclusive approach that guarantees fairness and equal opportunities for all students and staff. Christian school heads practice adaptive leadership by making decisions that reflect the diverse needs of their culturally and religiously varied student body. They promote diverse representation in school leadership, encourage collaborative decision-making, and create spaces where all voices are heard and respected. This approach helps bridge divides and nurtures harmony within the school and the surrounding community.

Strong community ties are essential for school sustainability and acceptance within predominantly Muslim areas. Christian school heads actively collaborate with local leaders, parents, and stakeholders to build mutual trust and cooperation (Kleindienst, 2024). They initiate outreach programs, participate in interfaith dialogues, and support community development initiatives to reinforce their commitment to shared progress. These efforts strengthen the school's reputation and contribute to unity and shared responsibility for education (Valič, et al., 2023).

Institutionalizing equity and inclusion requires the establishment of clear policies and consistent implementation. Christian school leaders play a crucial role in formulating guidelines that respect and promote diversity, ensuring that school regulations, curricular materials, and disciplinary procedures are free from bias or discrimination. They advocate for inclusive admission policies, culturally responsive pedagogy, and equitable allocation of resources to advance educational fairness. By aligning these policies with the specific cultural and social contexts of their diverse communities, school heads help embed inclusivity as a permanent value rather than a short-term effort (Merry & Driessen, 2020).

The lived experiences of participants reveal that fostering trustful relationships between students and adults significantly boosts students' confidence, motivation, and academic success. Research indicates that students who develop strong connections with adults are more likely to engage positively with their peers, enhancing their overall social and academic outcomes (Sarat, 2022). Moreover, collaborative leadership emphasizes the importance of valuing the contributions of all stakeholders, recognizing their expertise and commitment. This leadership style is marked by a focus on community resilience and recovery, achieved through active collaboration and strategic partnerships with relevant organizations (Whelan, 2023).

Leadership is pivotal in nurturing inclusive practices and fostering a sense of belonging, especially for minority groups such as Muslim community members. Effective leaders address issues of discrimination, bias, and interfaith dialogue, which are critical for promoting social cohesion (Beatty, et al., 2020). Schools can advance cultural integration and inclusivity by implementing strategies that enhance cultural awareness, foster open communication, and employ inclusive instructional methods (Beresford-Dey, et al., 2024).

Essential Theme 2: Building Equitable and Inclusive Community

This theme was described from the three (3) categories such as (1) Cultural Competence, (2) Community Engagement, (3) Inclusive Leadership, and (4) Policy and Practice. These represent the three core ideas: (1) building relationships, (2) community outreach engagement, and (3) collaborative leadership.

Moreover, building strong relationships between educators, students, and the community is crucial for fostering inclusive learning environments. Trust, respect, and cultural sensitivity are essential in promoting student motivation, academic performance, and social connections. By embracing diverse perspectives and providing individualized support, educators can create a supportive and inclusive environment that values the richness of students' cultural backgrounds.

R2-D2: *"Kapag strong ang support ng community, ang mga magulang at iba pang stakeholder ay united at strong din ang ugnayan sa kakayahan ng mga learners na sumali sa mga activities at ang kanilang tiwala at suporta ay kanilang ini extend lalo na Malaki ang trust, kapag tayo ay palakaibigan at nagpakita ng paggalang sa kanilang kultura."*
[When community support is strong, the parents and other stakeholders joined together to establish engagement in learners' ability to participate and give their resources freely when we are friendly and showed respect for their culture.]

Christian school heads in predominantly Muslim communities navigate complex cultural and religious dynamics that demand a profound understanding of diversity, effective communication, and inclusive teaching



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strategies. This theme highlights their commitment to raising cultural awareness, enhancing communication, and implementing inclusive educational practices to cultivate a harmonious and productive learning environment.

A deep appreciation and respect for cultural diversity are essential for school leaders operating in multicultural contexts. Christian school heads actively foster cultural sensitivity by incorporating local traditions, values, and customs into school programs and activities. They encourage both teachers and students to embrace diverse cultural perspectives, thereby nurturing an environment grounded in inclusivity and mutual respect. Nonetheless, challenges often emerge when cultural misunderstandings or religious biases create barriers, prompting school leaders to adopt diplomatic and empathetic approaches in their engagement with the community.

Effective communication plays a critical role in bridging religious and cultural divides. Christian school heads utilize a variety of strategies to facilitate open, respectful dialogue among students, parents, and community leaders. These include multilingual communication methods, community meetings, and structured forums designed to address concerns, dispel misconceptions, and foster collaboration. By maintaining transparent and culturally sensitive communication, school leaders build trust and strengthen relationships between the school and the wider community, helping to prevent conflicts and promote unity (Beresford-Dey, et al., 2024).

To create a welcoming and equitable learning environment, Christian school heads emphasize inclusive teaching practices that cater to students from diverse backgrounds. They train educators to use culturally responsive pedagogy, integrate diverse perspectives into the curriculum, and ensure school policies reflect fairness and respect for all faiths. By fostering inclusivity in the classroom, they create a safe space for students to express themselves, engage in meaningful discussions, and develop a sense of belonging regardless of their religious or cultural identities.

Narratives highlighted the statements of Chunoo, et al. (2019), that schools must be on the lookout for various forms of bullying. Instructors must understand the legal framework and make their policies explicit and protocols for looking into and reacting to instances of prejudice. Neighborhoods and schools that set an example of tolerance for diversity to keep pupils safe, opposing acts of bullying (Kleindienst, 2024).

Hence, dialogue is not limited to official or academic settings; it is a component of everyday life where various cultural and religious groups engage with one another directly and where conflicts between them are most noticeable (Andrabi, 2020).

Table 2. Essential Theme on Christian School Heads in Muslim-Populated Communities Balanced Challenges

Probing Issue	Core Ideas	Categories	Essential Theme
Fostering Equality, Unity, and Social Cohesion	Equality	Community Development	Holistic engagement for societal growth
	Family Orientation	Educational Awareness	
	Islamic practices	Interfaith and Family Relations	
	Partnership building	Leadership and Governance	

Essential Theme 2: Holistic Engagement for Societal Growth

This theme comprised four (4) categories such as (1) Community Development, (2) Educational Awareness, (3) Interfaith and Family Relations, and (4) Leadership and Governance. These represent the four (4) core ideas: (1) Equality, (2) Family Orientation, (3) Islamic practices, and (4) Partnership building.

Leadership is an element of governance and management in a social platform. It needs appropriate training and professional experience to exercise its responsibilities and accountabilities. Participants asserted a leadership role in a Muslim community.



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Luke: *"Kapag nagbibigay ng trabaho sa department, maraming mga Muslim teachers ang nabibigyan ng mga gawain, pantay sa mga Christian teachers din sa mga aspektong nagagawa nila pareho na naangkop din sa kanilang iba't-ibang kultura." [When giving designations in the department, several Muslim teachers were given undertakings, Christians were given too, the same as other male teachers but in respect to their culture]*

Christian school leaders in predominantly Muslim communities navigate complex social and educational landscapes, requiring a multidimensional approach to leadership. This theme highlights their efforts to promote inclusive development, strengthen interfaith relations, and ensure effective governance. Their lived experiences reveal the importance of holistic engagement that addresses community needs while supporting the sustainability of their schools.

These leaders play a vital role in fostering community development by actively collaborating with local stakeholders, including religious and civic leaders. They extend their influence beyond the classroom by implementing programs such as livelihood projects, health initiatives, and outreach activities, which help build trust and deepen connections with the broader Muslim community. Despite cultural and religious differences, Christian school leaders prioritize collaboration and shared goals to create a unified vision for progress, tackling social challenges such as poverty, literacy, and youth empowerment.

Raising awareness about the value of education is a vital responsibility for school leaders, especially in religiously diverse settings. Christian school heads play an instrumental role in advocating for inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for both Christian and Muslim students. They initiate community dialogues, parent engagement activities, and teacher development programs to foster understanding and promote peace through education (Kleindienst, 2024). Nevertheless, these leaders often encounter challenges such as entrenched religious biases, limited funding, and resistance from community members who may misinterpret the intentions or missions of Christian-led institutions (Sarat, 2022).

Given the interreligious composition of their communities, Christian school heads actively engage in interfaith initiatives to build trust and cooperation among diverse stakeholders. Activities such as intercultural school events, shared celebrations of universal values, and peace education workshops are often employed to promote harmonious relationships among students and parents of different faiths (Schliesser, 2020). By cultivating a school culture rooted in mutual respect and inclusive values, school leaders challenge stereotypes and foster environments where education becomes a unifying rather than divisive force (Merry & Driessen, 2020).

Effective leadership and governance are also critical in sustaining Christian schools within Muslim-majority settings. School heads are tasked with navigating institutional responsibilities while maintaining sensitivity to the religious and sociopolitical dynamics of their communities. Many adopt adaptive and culturally responsive leadership strategies that prioritize diplomacy, inclusion, and ethical governance (Stepišnik, et al., 2020). These strategies enable schools to remain relevant and trusted, despite external pressures and ongoing challenges in religiously plural societies (Kleindienst, 2024).

It confirmed the need for inclusive leadership, cultural competency, community involvement, and inclusive practices in promoting inclusive practices, as underscored by and emphasized the tenets of the requirement that community leaders and teachers use mechanisms such as developing relationships, community outreach involvement, and collective leadership to encourage inclusive practices.

Conclusions

This qualitative study provides rich insights into the lived experiences of Christian school heads working in Muslim-majority communities, emphasizing their crucial roles in fostering inclusion, promoting interfaith understanding, and demonstrating adaptive leadership. The three core themes—fostering awareness, communication, and inclusivity; building equitable and inclusive communities; and holistic engagement for societal growth—highlight how school heads navigate religious and cultural diversity to promote unity and educational equity.

Additionally, culturally competent leadership, community engagement, and inclusive governance are vital in addressing discrimination, building trust, and creating safe learning environments. By practicing collaborative leadership, respecting Islamic traditions, and strengthening interfaith and family relations, school heads help dismantle prejudice and foster mutual understanding. Their efforts go beyond the classroom, as they engage local stakeholders, develop inclusive policies, and promote community-driven educational practices.



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The implications of this study extend to educational leaders, policymakers, and teachers. It underscores the transformative potential of culturally responsive leadership and inclusive practices in diverse settings. By cultivating respect, dialogue, and equitable opportunities, school leaders contribute to a more just and cohesive society—where every student, regardless of faith or background, can thrive.

Recommendations

The findings of this study hold important implications for a range of stakeholders. Academic establishments are encouraged to exemplify inclusive practices and policies, emphasizing the need for schools to prioritize approaches that celebrate diversity and promote social harmony. For teachers, ongoing training and support are essential to effectively foster inclusion, understanding, and leadership within diverse classrooms. School administrators are urged to build strong connections with the local community through outreach and partnership initiatives, strengthening collaboration and support networks.

Policy makers within the Department of Education (DepEd) are called upon to develop and implement policies that support inclusive education and address the varied needs of students. Additionally, they should ensure that appropriate resources and professional development opportunities are provided to teachers to enhance their capacity for inclusive teaching. Community leaders play a vital role in encouraging interfaith cooperation and dialogue, fostering a society grounded in respect and mutual understanding. They should advocate for policies and practices that promote social cohesion, meet the diverse needs of learners, and support inclusive education initiatives.

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