

EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AMONG SCHOOL HEADS

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Article History

Received: 22 / 04 / 2025

Accepted: 08 / 05 / 2025

Published: 12 / 05 / 2025

Abstract: This study aimed to examine the impact of culturally responsive leadership on teacher retention intentions and student inclusivity in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), focusing specifically on the division of the Special Geographic Area (SGA). A mixed-method research design with an exploratory sequential approach was employed, consisting of qualitative interviews with 20 senior teachers and a subsequent quantitative survey of 321 teachers. The study identified key themes through interviews, which were used to develop a structured questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using thematic coding, correlation, and regression techniques to assess the relationship between leadership practices, teacher retention, and student inclusivity.

In the qualitative phase, teachers identified three central themes related to culturally responsive leadership: inclusivity and cultural respect, equitable and supportive environments, and empowered cultural collaboration and communication. These practices were seen to foster a supportive school climate, promote cultural expression, and enhance mutual respect. The quantitative phase confirmed that teachers perceived leadership practices, particularly cultural collaboration and equity, as significantly impacting teacher retention and student inclusivity. The study found a strong correlation between these leadership practices and positive outcomes in teacher job satisfaction and student participation, with cultural collaboration being a strong predictor.

The study's conclusions highlighted the importance of culturally responsive leadership in fostering a sense of belonging, trust, and collaboration within the school community. It was determined that sustaining these practices is essential for improving both teacher retention and student inclusivity. A comprehensive policy brief was developed and verified from stakeholders to support the continued institutionalization of inclusive leadership practices, including the implementation of professional development programs, the embedding of inclusivity in school structures, and the provision of resources to support diversity.

Keywords: Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL); Cultural Competence; Cultural Responsiveness; Teacher Retention Intentions; Student Inclusivity; Inclusive Educational Policies; Cultural Representation in Curriculum; Equity in Resources and Opportunities; Equitable and Supportive Environment; Inclusivity and Cultural Respect; Professional Development Opportunities; Workplace Climate and Support; Cultural Collaboration and Communication; Job Satisfaction; Student Participation; BARMM (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao); Special Geographic Area Division; Non-Western Educational Contexts; Policy Framework; Reflective Practices.

How to Cite: Kumaka, H. B., Sinolinding, H. M., (2025). EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AMONG SCHOOL HEADS. *IRASS Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(5)98-111.

Introduction

Culturally responsive leadership (CRL) is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in addressing the diverse needs of students in multicultural educational settings, fostering an inclusive environment where cultural diversity is embraced, all students receive the support necessary to thrive academically and socially, and teachers are empowered to implement practices that reflect and respect the cultural backgrounds of their students.

However, the problem is that many administrators lack the cultural competence necessary to lead effectively in diverse environments, as leadership programs often prioritize managerial skills over cultural awareness (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). This gap is not limited to Western contexts; in the Philippines, Brooks (2017) found that fewer than 30% of school leaders in

Mindanao had received any diversity training, which impacts their ability to foster inclusive education.

Anent this, teacher retention in diverse schools is a growing concern. Ingersoll et al. (2019) found that teachers in schools with high minority populations in the U.S. are 50% more likely to leave their positions within the first five years due to inadequate support from culturally responsive leadership. This issue is echoed in the Philippines, where teachers report feeling unsupported and disconnected from their students, contributing to high turnover rates (Santiago II, Santos, & Santiago-Centeno, 2022).

Similarly, student inclusivity remains a significant concern. OECD (2015), show that students from ethnic minorities are less likely to actively participate in classroom discussions. Furthermore, the lack of culturally relevant curricula has been shown to negatively impact minority students' academic success and school attendance (Dee & Penner, 2017). In the Philippines, the Department of Education (2020) has highlighted disparities in curriculum representation, which further underscores the importance of culturally responsive leadership in ensuring inclusivity.

While the literature on CRL has grown, there is a noticeable gap in empirical research exploring the direct impact of CRL on teacher retention intentions and student inclusivity, particularly in culturally sensitive contexts such as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Studies like those by Khalifa et al. (2016) focus primarily on Western contexts, where the sociopolitical landscape differs significantly from the challenges faced in regions like BARMM. The unique cultural dynamics in such regions—including issues related to cultural trauma and community tensions—are underexplored in current literature, pointing to the need for localized research in the Philippine context.

Moreover, while studies such as Ingersoll et al. (2019) have explored teacher turnover in diverse schools, there is limited research connecting culturally responsive leadership practices specifically to teacher retention intentions. Existing studies on teacher retention generally address leadership styles in broad terms, but few focus on how culturally responsive leadership directly influences teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions. Santiago II et al. (2022) highlighted factors affecting teacher turnover in the Philippines but did not examine how culturally inclusive leadership might mitigate these challenges.

Finally, much of the existing literature on student inclusivity has concentrated on curricular reforms rather than leadership practices. While the role of culturally relevant curricula in fostering inclusivity was emphasized, less attention has been paid to how leadership behaviors can directly promote an inclusive school environment. There is a need for more research that examines how school leaders use culturally responsive strategies not only in curriculum development, but also in policy implementation, student support services, and extracurricular activities (Brooks, 2017).

This study aimed to address these gaps by exploring how culturally responsive leadership influences teacher retention intentions and student inclusivity in the Philippine educational context, particularly in regions with complex socio-cultural dynamics.

Statement of the Problem

The general objective of this study was to contextualize the practices of culturally responsive leadership and determine its impact on teacher retention intentions and student inclusivity in BARMM Region for the school year 2024-2025. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

Exploring Teachers' Perspectives on Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices Among School Heads

1. What are the themes describing practices on culturally responsive leadership among school heads as perceived by teachers?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study may bear relevance to the following:

To Policymakers. This study highlights the need for integrating cultural competence into leadership training programs and policies to address the diverse needs of students and teachers. Its findings can guide the development of inclusive educational policies, particularly in culturally sensitive regions like BARMM.

To School Administrators. The study provides practical insights on how culturally responsive leadership can improve teacher retention and student inclusivity. Administrators can use these findings to implement professional development programs and foster a more supportive school environment.

To Teachers. Teachers can benefit from understanding how culturally responsive leadership creates a supportive environment, empowering them to address diverse student needs effectively. This study encourages reflective practices to enhance inclusivity and equity in the classroom.

To Future Researchers. This study serves as a foundation for exploring culturally responsive leadership's impact on teacher retention and student inclusivity in non-Western contexts. It also opens avenues for further research in quantitative and localized studies in the Philippines.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study contextualized culturally responsive leadership (CRL) practices by focusing exclusively on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), specifically in the division of Special Geographic Area. The themes developed were based solely on this region to reflect its unique socio-cultural context.

The study was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, it explored teachers' perspectives on culturally responsive leadership practices among school heads to develop contextualized themes. A total of 20 teachers were invited for in-depth interviews. These themes then served as the foundation for designing a questionnaire to assess the level of culturally responsive leadership in the region.

The second phase examined the impact of culturally responsive leadership on teacher retention intentions and student inclusivity. The questionnaire underwent pilot testing to determine the reliability level of the developed questionnaire. A total of 321 respondents participated in completing the survey to gather quantitative data on these aspects.

Finally, in the third phase, a policy framework was crafted based on the findings of the study and verified from the

participants to provide actionable recommendations for improving culturally responsive leadership practices in the BARMM context.

Operational Definition of Terms

Cultural Collaboration and Communication This entails meaningful engagement with parents, students, and community members from diverse backgrounds through inclusive communication and shared decision-making. School leaders promote open dialogue, multilingual communication, and culturally sensitive outreach to ensure all voices are heard. The aim is to build trust, unity, and a collaborative environment that values diverse perspectives.

Cultural Representation in Curriculum. This refers to the extent to which the school curriculum includes and reflects diverse cultural perspectives, histories, and contributions, ensuring that students from various cultural backgrounds see themselves represented and acknowledged in their education.

Cultural Responsiveness. This refers to leadership and practices in schools that are rooted in and reflective of the culture of the community they serve. It ensures that policies, teaching methods, and interactions are aligned with the community's cultural values, traditions, and needs to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL). This refers to leadership practices that are sensitive to and inclusive of the diverse cultural backgrounds of both students and staff. It involves school leaders using culturally relevant strategies to create an environment where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, while empowering teachers to implement inclusive practices that reflect cultural diversity.

Equitable and Supportive Environment. This term describes the creation of a school climate where all students—regardless of background—have fair access to resources, leadership roles, and learning opportunities. School leaders actively address discrimination, support language-diverse learners, and promote professional development in cultural competence. It emphasizes fairness, respect, and empowerment, especially for marginalized groups.

Equity in Resources and Opportunities. This refers to the equitable distribution of educational resources and opportunities, ensuring that all students have access to the same level of support, extracurricular activities, learning materials, and other resources that contribute to their academic and social development.

Inclusivity and Cultural Respect. This refers to school leaders' deliberate efforts to honor and celebrate cultural diversity through multicultural events, inclusive decision-making, and the promotion of culturally responsive teaching. It involves consulting with community leaders, ensuring that school policies reflect diverse values and traditions.

Job Satisfaction. This refers to the level of contentment teachers experience with various aspects of their job, including their work environment, compensation, leadership, and relationship with students.

Professional Development Opportunities. This refers to the availability and accessibility of learning and growth opportunities for teachers, such as training, workshops, conferences, and other forms of career advancement that enhance their skills and knowledge.

Student Inclusivity. This refers to the practices, policies, and conditions that ensure all students, regardless of cultural background or individual differences, feel respected, valued, and have equal access to educational opportunities.

Student Participation. This refers to the degree to which students actively engage in classroom activities, discussions, and decision-making processes, with a particular focus on ensuring that students from marginalized.

Teacher Retention Intentions. In this study, teacher retention intentions refer to the likelihood that teachers plan to remain in their current teaching position and profession, influenced by factors such as job satisfaction, opportunities for professional growth, and the support they receive in their work environment.

Workplace Climate and Support. This refers to the overall environment and support system within the school, including the degree to which teachers feel valued, supported by school leaders, and empowered to perform their roles effectively.

Methodology

This chapter details the systematic approach employed in the study, including the research design, which outlines the framework for achieving the objectives. The locale of the study is described to contextualize the research setting, followed by an identification of the respondents and the sampling procedure used to select them. The research instruments are specified to ensure reliable data collection, while the data gathering procedure explains the step-by-step process of acquiring the necessary information. Also, the data analysis section outlines the methods used to interpret the collected data, ensuring validity and relevance to the research objectives. Finally, the researcher's role and ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter.

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-method design, specifically an exploratory sequential design, to investigate the relationship between culturally responsive leadership and its impact on teacher retention intentions and student inclusivity in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). An exploratory sequential design involved conducting a qualitative phase first to explore the research problem, followed by a quantitative phase to test and generalize the findings (Creswell, 2014).

In the first phase, qualitative data were collected to identify and develop themes related to culturally responsive leadership in the context of BARMM. This phase involved in-depth interviews or focus group discussions with educators, administrators, and other stakeholders to gain insights into their experiences and perceptions of culturally responsive leadership practices. The resulting themes formed the basis for developing a structured questionnaire in the next phase (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The second phase involved collecting quantitative data using a questionnaire developed from the qualitative themes identified in Phase 1. The questionnaire underwent reliability analysis (Cronbach, 1951) to evaluate the consistency and stability of the instrument across different respondents.

In this phase, the study assessed the levels of culturally responsive leadership practices, teacher retention intentions, and student inclusivity among respondents. Additionally, it examined the relationships between these variables to determine if culturally responsive leadership practices had a significant influence on

teacher retention and student inclusivity. Correlation and regression analysis were employed to explore these relationships and provide a deeper understanding of the impact of culturally responsive leadership in the educational context of BARMM.

In the third phase, the study formulated policy recommendations based on the findings from the previous phases. The goal was to identify strategies that could enhance culturally responsive leadership practices, improve teacher retention, and foster greater student inclusivity in BARMM. The policy recommendations were grounded in the study's results, with a focus on addressing the specific needs and challenges identified in the region's educational context.

Locale of the Study

This study took place in the division of the Special Geographic Area (SGA) within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) during the qualitative phase. In the quantitative phase, however, only the SGA division served as the study's locale.

The Special Geographic Area (SGA) in BARMM comprised 63 barangays that opted to join BARMM through the 2019 plebiscite. These barangays, although geographically spread across six towns in Cotabato Province, fell under BARMM's administrative jurisdiction. The SGA was characterized by its rural and remote communities, where schools encountered unique challenges, including limited infrastructure, resources, and accessibility (Bangsamoro Information Office, 2019).

This division provided a valuable lens for exploring the varied educational and socio-cultural contexts within BARMM, particularly in relation to implementing culturally responsive leadership in diverse rural and urban settings.

The specific locale of the study, found in the Special Geographic Area (SGA) of BARMM, includes the municipalities of Kaplawan, Old Kaabacan, Kadayangan, Nabalawag, Pahamuddin 1, Pahamuddin 2, Malidegao-1, Malidegao-2, Ligawasan, and Tugunan. These municipalities form the primary focus of the study, providing a unique socio-cultural context for the research within the SGA-BARMM.

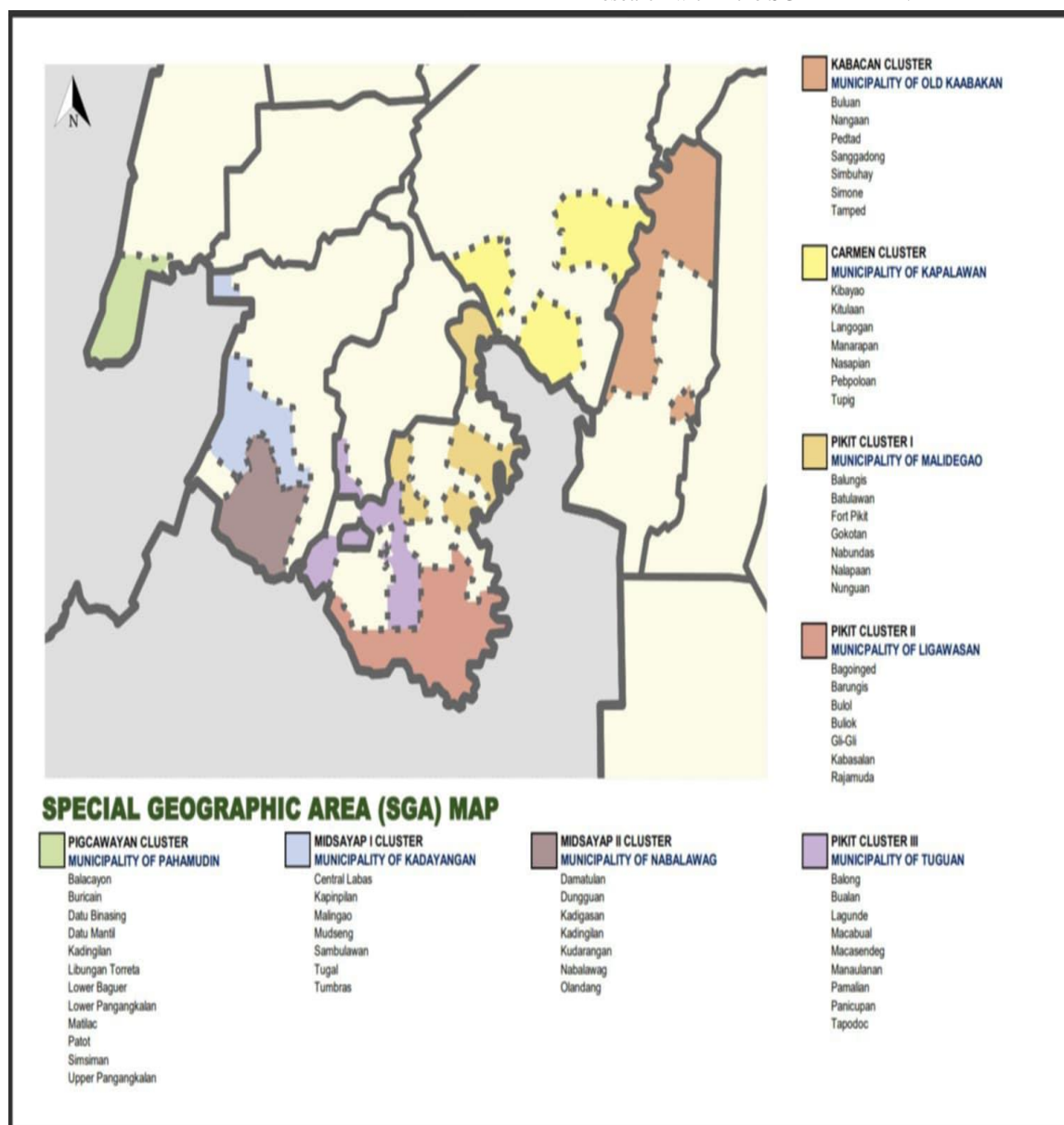


Fig. 2. (MindaNews, 2024) Map showing the location of the study

Respondents/Participants of the Study

In the qualitative phase, the key informants were divided into two groups representing the Schools Division of the Special

Geographic Area (SGA) in BARMM. There were 20 participants, selected based on their roles and experience in educational leadership, particularly in culturally responsive practices. These participants primarily included senior teachers with extensive knowledge of the unique socio-cultural dynamics of their respective divisions. In-depth Interviews were conducted to allow an in-depth exploration of their perspectives, experiences, and insights on culturally responsive leadership. These interviews aimed to uncover key themes and practices that aligned with the local cultural context, providing a foundational understanding for the subsequent quantitative phase.

In the quantitative phase, 321 teachers from the Special Geographic Area Division were surveyed using structured questionnaires. These teachers were selected to ensure a representative sample across various schools within the division.

The questionnaires were designed to measure three critical dimensions: (1) the extent of implementation of culturally responsive leadership, (2) teachers' retention intentions, and (3) student inclusivity. The data collected provided a broader understanding of how culturally responsive leadership practices influenced teacher retention and fostered an inclusive environment for students. This phase quantified the impact and prevalence of such leadership practices, complementing the qualitative insights from the FGDs.

In phase 3, 20 verifier-informants were tapped to verify and give comments to the proposed policies.

Table 1 shows the data distribution of the respondents and informants within the division of SGA in BARMM.

Table 1. Distribution of research respondents/participants of the study

Special Geographic Area	No. of Teachers	No. of Respondents	No. of Informants
Kapalawan	157	34	
Old Kaabacan	136	31	
Kadayangan	172	25	
Nabalawag	183	38	
Pahamuddin 1	148	33	
Pahamuddin 2	165	36	20
Malidegao-1	192	27	
Malidegao-2	169	29	
Ligawasan	129	33	
Tugunan	178	35	
TOTAL	1629	321	20

Sampling Procedure

In the qualitative phase, the researcher used purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique where participants were selected based on specific characteristics and relevance to the study's focus. This approach ensured that participants could provide rich, detailed insights into culturally responsive leadership practices. The criteria that were set for selection included:

- Being a regular-permanent teacher, and
- Being a senior teacher with more than 10 years of experience.

For the quantitative phase, the researcher employed Slovin's formula to determine the appropriate sample size for the study. Given that the population consisted of 1,629 teachers, the calculated sample size was 321. The study then adopted proportional allocation sampling to determine the distribution of respondents across the different municipalities. This method ensured that the sample size from each municipality reflected its proportion in relation to the total population. The sample size for each municipality was calculated using the following formula:

Sample size per municipality = Total population/Population of division × Total sample size

In this study, the identified sample size in the Special Geographic Area (SGA) Division is 321. Based on this total sample size, it was divided by the total population of the entire division, which is 1,629. The result was then multiplied by the total population of teachers per municipality.

Research Instrument

In the qualitative phase, the study utilized an interview guide that included a primary question and probing questions derived from the statement of the problem. This interview guide was assessed by experts for content validity to ensure that the questions were relevant and accurate. The themes identified in this phase informed the development of a questionnaire focused on culturally responsive leadership practices.

In the quantitative phase, the study employed a researcher-developed questionnaire, which also underwent content validity assessment to verify that it accurately measured the intended constructs. To ensure reliability, the researcher conducted a pilot test to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. This pilot test assessed how well the items collectively measured the same construct and examined their interrelatedness.

The reliability analysis of the researcher-developed questionnaire was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the instrument used in the quantitative phase of the study. In Part I, which comprised 24 items, the computed Cronbach's Alpha was 0.751, indicating acceptable reliability and suggesting that the items were adequately interrelated and measured the same underlying construct. For Part II, which included 21 items, the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.771, demonstrating a good level of

internal consistency. Likewise, Part III, consisting of another set of 21 items, yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.766, also reflecting acceptable reliability. All three parts of the questionnaire were tested using responses from 50 valid cases, and no data were excluded from the analysis. These results confirm that the instrument possesses sufficient internal consistency and is suitable for use in assessing culturally responsive leadership, teacher retention intentions, and student inclusivity.

Table 2a. Likert scale to elicit the school heads' culturally responsive leadership practices

Level	Range	Description	Descriptive Interpretation
5	4.21-5.0	Highly Observed	The indicator is fully and consistently observed across areas with a rating within the range of 91-100%
4	3.41-4.20	Observed	The indicator is almost fully and consistently observed across areas with a rating within the range of 81-90%
3	2.61-3.40	Moderately Observed	The indicator is partially observed across areas with a rating within the range of 71-80%
2	1.81-2.60	Slightly Observed	The indicator is minimally observed across areas with a rating within the range of 61-70%
1	1.0-1.80	Very Slightly Observed	The indicator is very minimally observed across areas with a rating within the range of 60% & below.

Table 2b. Likert scale to elicit the teacher retention intentions and student inclusivity

Level	Range	Description	Descriptive Interpretation
5	4.21-5.0	Highly Demonstrated	The indicator is fully and consistently exhibited across areas with a rating within the range of 91-100%
4	3.41-4.20	Demonstrated	The indicator is almost fully and consistently exhibited across areas with a rating within the range of 81-90%
3	2.61-3.40	Moderately Demonstrated	The indicator is partially exhibited across areas with a rating within the range of 71-80%
2	1.81-2.60	Slightly Demonstrated	The indicator is minimally exhibited across areas with a rating within the range of 61-70%
1	1.0-1.80	Very Slightly Demonstrated	The indicator is very minimally exhibited across areas with a rating within the range of 60% & below.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed a structured approach, beginning with the sending of communication letters to the Schools Division Superintendents in the BARMM Region, specifically in the division of the Special Geographic Area. After receiving approval, these letters were forwarded to the heads of the selected schools.

For data collection, 20 teacher-participants were purposefully selected for in-depth interviews to gain qualitative insights. Additionally, a survey was administered to 321 teachers to gather quantitative data. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, with strict measures implemented to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants throughout the research process, thereby adhering to ethical standards and protecting participant information.

Data Analysis

In Phase 1 of the study, which was the qualitative phase, the research adopted a phenomenological approach to explore participants' experiences and perspectives on culturally responsive leadership in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). This approach was considered ideal for understanding the essence of participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were conducted using in-depth interviews to gather rich, detailed responses. Given the

phenomenological nature of the study, the interview responses were fully transcribed and analyzed thematically. Thematic

analysis involved identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The goal of this analysis was to develop both global themes (which captured broad, overarching insights about culturally responsive leadership) and specific themes (which delved into more detailed aspects of participants' experiences). This thematic analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the participants' viewpoints on the practice of culturally responsive leadership in their educational settings.

In Phase 2, the quantitative phase, the global and specific themes related to culturally responsive leadership practices identified in Phase 1 informed the development of a questionnaire. This questionnaire underwent reliability analysis, such as Cronbach's alpha, to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the scale, ensuring that the instrument was stable and consistent in measuring what it intended to measure.

Additionally, in the quantitative phase, both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed. Descriptive statistics, such as means, were calculated to assess the levels of culturally responsive leadership, teacher retention intentions, and student inclusivity. Inferential statistics, including correlation analysis, were used to examine the relationships among these variables. Multiple regression analysis was then applied to determine the extent to which culturally responsive leadership practices influenced teacher retention intentions and student inclusivity, providing insights into how these factors interrelated.

In Phase 3, the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases informed the formulation of a policy brief aimed at enhancing culturally responsive leadership practices, improving teacher retention, and fostering greater student inclusivity. The analysis in this phase focused on identifying key areas where policies could be developed to address the challenges faced in implementing culturally responsive leadership in BARM schools. This phase utilized policy analysis methods to propose specific, actionable recommendations based on the study's results. The goal was to ensure that the findings contributed to the development of policies that supported a more inclusive and culturally responsive educational environment for both teachers and students. These policies could have included professional development programs for educators, curriculum adjustments that incorporated cultural competence, and support mechanisms to enhance teacher retention in diverse educational settings.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, the researcher played a vital role in ensuring that the participant selection process was accurate and systematic. The initial task involved determining the precise number of respondents from each of the two divisions included in the study. This step was crucial to ensure the sample's representativeness, with participants selected based on specific criteria such as demographic characteristics, teaching experience, or other relevant factors that aligned with the study's objectives. These criteria were designed to ensure the sample accurately reflected the population being studied.

Once participants were identified, the researcher conducted an orientation for the key informants. During this session, the study's goals, objectives, and participant expectations were explained in detail. This orientation aimed to ensure that participants clearly understood the purpose of the study and their role in it, fostering informed consent and voluntary participation—both of which were critical ethical considerations in research.

During the data collection phase, the researcher oversaw the entire process, including administering surveys, conducting interviews, and managing other data collection methods. To ensure accuracy, the researcher fully transcribed all participant responses, safeguarding against any loss of information. Comprehensive transcription was essential for preserving the data's integrity and enabling detailed analysis later. Following transcription, the researcher worked closely with a debriefer, an expert in language analysis, to examine the data. The debriefer reviewed the transcriptions thoroughly, identifying patterns, themes, and key insights derived from the participants' feedback. This collaborative analysis helped uncover significant trends, recurring themes, and issues relevant to the study's research questions.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection and well-being of all participants involved.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in the study was voluntary, with participants being informed of the purpose and scope of the research beforehand. They were given the opportunity to consent freely without any form of coercion.

Privacy and Confidentiality: Measures were in place to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants' information. All data collected were securely stored and accessed only by authorized personnel.

Informed Consent Process: The principle of respect for persons was observed by ensuring that participants provided informed consent. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

Recruitment: The recruitment process was carried out by appropriate personnel, ensuring that participants were selected fairly and equitably.

Risks: Potential risks, whether physical, psychological, or socio-economic, were assessed and minimized. Plans for managing adverse events were established in case any issues arose during the study.

Benefits: The study aimed to provide direct benefits to participants through knowledge acquisition and health education, as well as contribute to generalizable knowledge that might address participants' conditions.

Incentives or Compensation: Any compensation or incentives offered to participants were reviewed for appropriateness and aligned with ethical standards, ensuring that they were not coercive.

Community Consideration: The potential impact of the research on the local community was considered, with efforts made to respect cultural traditions and avoid stigma or strain on local resources.

Collaborative Study Terms: If applicable, the study clearly defined collaborative terms, including intellectual property sharing, transparency, and capacity building.

Falsification: The study maintained the highest standards of academic integrity by avoiding any form of falsification or misrepresentation of data.

Conflict of Interest (COI): The study ensured that there was no conflict of interest (COI), with all potential conflicts disclosed transparently.

Focus Group Participant Identification: In the case of focus groups, participants were reminded to keep shared information confidential, and this was clearly stated in the consent form.

Deceit: There were no misleading or deceitful practices used in the study. Participants were fully informed of all relevant aspects of the research.

Observation: Ethical considerations for observation were in place, including appropriate notices to inform the public of research activities in public or quasi-public places.

Permission from Organization/Location: Written permission was sought from the organization or location where the research took place. The person granting the permission had the authority to do so, and the research activities were organized well in advance.

Technology Issues: Ethical provisions were made for the use of online panels and data collection in online environments. All provisions for data collection, online communication, and participant understanding of these technologies were clearly stated and accessible.

Authorship: The criteria for authorship were based on substantial contributions to the study's design, data acquisition, analysis, interpretation, drafting, and critical revision. Authors

were credited only for their significant intellectual contributions and for final approval of the published version.

Exploring Teachers' Perspectives on Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices of School Heads

In this phase of the study, qualitative data were gathered to presents the findings from interviews with teachers, aimed at gathering insights into the culturally responsive leadership practices of their school heads. The participants shared their personal experiences through in-depth interviews, which were recorded via phone with their consent.

Table 1 shows that the experiences shared by the teacher-participants which includes three (3) global themes revealed from the responses: Inclusivity and Cultural Respect, Equitable and Supportive Environment, and Empowered Cultural Collaboration and Communication.

Inclusivity and Cultural Respect. This emerged as a critical theme in the narratives shared by the informants. They expressed that their school heads actively led initiatives to honor and celebrate cultural diversity to ensure that both students and staff from various cultural backgrounds felt valued and appreciated. This was achieved through the integration of traditional practices, cultural celebrations, and multicultural events into school activities. Such efforts fostered a sense of belonging, unity, and mutual respect within the school community.

The informants further emphasized that in their schools, multicultural events were celebrated to honor diverse traditions and promote inclusivity. These activities served as a platform to bridge cultural gaps and create a harmonious environment where everyone felt accepted and embraced. Through these actions, the school heads demonstrated their commitment to building an inclusive and respectful educational community.

In support to this, teacher-informants shared that:

"In our school, we have multicultural events to honor various traditions and foster inclusivity within the school community. Organizing activities that showcase diverse cultures offer students and staff chances to learn about and appreciate different customs and beliefs. This approach promotes mutual respect, enhances cultural awareness, and cultivates a more welcoming and supportive school atmosphere." Informant 8

"My school head cultivates a welcoming environment for cultural expression, ensuring that both students and staff feel at ease when sharing their traditions and identities. Through Implementing inclusive policies, organizing cultural events, and facilitating open discussions, she promotes respect and appreciation for diversity. This strategy contributes to a school community where everyone feels valued, accepted, and empowered to showcase their cultural heritage." Informant 15

Moreover, the informants conveyed that when it comes to inclusivity, their school heads actively consult with local leaders and minority groups. This collaborative approach ensures that school policies and activities are not only culturally sensitive but also aligned with the community's needs and traditions. Incorporating the insights and perspectives of diverse stakeholders foster an environment where every cultural identity is respected and valued, further strengthening the sense of unity and belonging within the school community.

One participant shared that:

"My school head consults with indigenous or Moro leaders and representatives from minority groups before implementing school policies to ensure that decisions are culturally sensitive and inclusive. Seeking their insights recognizes the importance of diverse perspectives in shaping policies that meet the needs of all students. This approach builds trust and collaboration, creating a school environment that respects and honors cultural heritage." Informant 1

Another informant confessed that:

"Our school head involves community leaders in decision-making processes to make sure that school policies and programs align with the needs and values of the wider community. Actively seeking their input encourages collaboration and builds stronger relationships with local stakeholders. This inclusive approach contributes to a more supportive and culturally responsive learning environment for students." Informant 9

Nevertheless, the informants revealed that they were motivated to embrace culturally relevant pedagogy in their teaching practices. They shared that their school heads encouraged them to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into their lessons, enriching the learning experience and fostering inclusivity.

In fact, two informants said that:

"Our school head encouraged teachers to adopt culturally responsive teaching strategies that reflect the diverse backgrounds of their students. Integrating students' cultural experiences into lessons can make learning more relevant and engaging." Informant 3

"My school head encouraged teachers to weave culturally relevant pedagogy into their lessons to make learning more meaningful and inclusive for students. This method not only enhances student learning but also cultivates respect for diversity and nurtures a sense of belonging among all learners." Informant 4

The narratives imply that the commitment to honoring cultural diversity and fostering inclusivity in schools cultivates a sense of belonging and unity among students and staff. Active collaboration with local leaders and minority groups ensures that school policies reflect the needs and traditions of the community, strengthening cultural sensitivity. Nonetheless, encouraging culturally relevant pedagogy enriches the learning experience, making it more engaging and inclusive while promoting mutual respect and appreciation for diverse backgrounds.

The aforementioned implication supports the finding that a culturally relevant school environment and belonging pedagogy are effective approaches for fostering inclusivity and diversity in education. These strategies incorporate students' cultural backgrounds and personal narratives into the learning process, enhancing engagement and promoting a sense of belonging. They acknowledge diverse cultural identities, encourage the critical examination of biases, and integrate culturally relevant materials and teaching methods (Koo et al., 2024).

Equitable and Supportive Environment. The second theme related to culturally responsive leadership focuses on ensuring that all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, have equitable access to education, resources, and leadership opportunities. Many informants shared that their school leaders

actively promote fairness by guaranteeing equal access to resources, programs, and leadership positions for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. These leaders champion initiatives that address the needs of minority or marginalized students and foster a safe environment where students can freely express their cultural identities.

In a similar vein, the informants shared that their school leaders take a proactive approach to addressing discrimination and promoting inclusivity by implementing policies that emphasize fairness, respect, and equity within the school community. These policies are designed to address incidents of discrimination promptly and seriously, ensuring a supportive environment for all. Fostering a school culture that actively discourages discrimination and bias create an equitable educational environment that tackles barriers disadvantaging certain groups while promoting inclusivity and respect.

In fact, one informant said that:

"My school head advocates for equal opportunities in leadership roles for students from all backgrounds to ensure diverse representation in decision-making processes. By encouraging and supporting students from various cultures to assume leadership positions, they promote inclusivity and empowerment." Informant 15

Likewise, two informants confessed that:

"My school head creates a safe space for students to express their cultural identities, encouraging them to share their traditions, languages, and experiences. Nurturing an environment of respect and acceptance helps students gain confidence in who they are. This approach not only strengthens the school community but also promotes cultural appreciation among peers." Informant 11

"My school head promotes equal opportunities for students from various cultural backgrounds by ensuring fair access to resources, programs, and leadership roles. Tackling barriers that may disadvantage certain groups cultivates an inclusive environment where all students can succeed. This strategy nurtures a school culture that values diversity, encourages participation, and supports the success of every student." Informant 20

Additionally, the participants mentioned that schools offer tailored support to students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, helping them succeed both academically and socially. School leaders also prioritize professional development in cultural competency for teachers, equipping them to effectively respond to the varied backgrounds of their students.

One participant shared that:

"Our school head supports professional development on cultural competency for teachers to help us better understand and respond to the diverse backgrounds of their students. Providing training and resources equip us educators with strategies to create inclusive and culturally responsive classrooms." Informant 6

In a similar vein, another informant confessed that:

"My school head offers support for students who speak languages other than the primary language of instruction by providing language assistance programs, bilingual resources, and tailored learning support. Addressing

language barriers ensure that all students can fully engage with the curriculum and take part in school activities." Informant 20

The finding manifests that school heads practice culturally responsive leadership by promoting an equitable and supportive environment. This underscores their critical role in addressing barriers and fostering inclusivity for all students. Ensuring fair access to resources, programs, and leadership roles, as well as implementing culturally responsive policies create an atmosphere where diversity is celebrated, and marginalized groups are empowered. Additionally, prioritizing teacher training in cultural competency and providing tailored support for linguistically diverse students further enhances the school community's capacity to embrace inclusivity and equity.

The aforementioned implication accords to the finding of Minkos et al. (2017) who emphasized the critical role of school leaders in promoting equity and inclusivity in diverse educational settings. Principals and administrators practice culturally responsive leadership by fostering a supportive environment, advocating for marginalized students, and addressing systemic barriers.

Empowered Cultural Collaboration and Communication. The final theme that emerged highlights the pivotal role of school leaders in fostering collaboration through meaningful engagement and communication with stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds. Actively involving parents in school planning committees ensure that various perspectives are integrated into decision-making processes, ultimately creating policies that reflect the community's collective values and needs. This collaborative approach extends beyond parents, as school leaders also engage students in discussions about cultural inclusion within school policies, empowering them to voice their thoughts and contribute to shaping a school environment that celebrates diversity.

Furthermore, school leaders cultivate an atmosphere of open dialogue, where teachers and students feel confident in expressing their cultural identities. This proactive strategy not only strengthens trust and mutual respect but also promotes a sense of belonging and unity within the school community. By valuing and incorporating diverse viewpoints, school leaders exemplify their commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that the educational experience is both culturally responsive and empowering for all members of the school ecosystem.

This conformed the responses of the participants who said that:

"In the school, my school head involves parents from various cultural backgrounds in school planning committees to ensure that diverse viewpoints are taken into account during decision-making. Actively engaging families, the school builds a sense of community and collaboration in shaping policies and programs. This strengthens the relationships between the school and its stakeholders, creating a supportive learning environment for every student." Informant 13

"Also, he promotes parent engagement by developing inclusive communication strategies and creating welcoming environments, regardless of linguistic or cultural differences. Offering translation services, multilingual materials, and culturally sensitive outreach makes it possible for all parents to actively participate in their children's education. This strategy enhances school-

community relationships and cultivates a more supportive learning atmosphere for students.” Informant 2

“Further, she creates an environment where both teachers and students feel at ease expressing their cultural identities by promoting open dialogue and representation. Through inclusive policies, celebrations, and classroom discussions, everyone has the chance to share their traditions and perspectives. This approach fosters mutual respect and strengthens the sense of belonging within the school.

” Informant 10

In addition, the teachers shared that their school heads foster collaboration by prioritizing dialogue within the school community. Through open communication channels, they create a safe space where cultural differences are not only respected but celebrated, ensuring inclusivity and unity among students, staff, and community members. Organizing forums that facilitate discussions about cultural inclusivity and promoting multilingual communication in school notices demonstrate a proactive commitment to bridging cultural gaps and nurturing an environment of mutual understanding and respect.

In support, participants narrated that:

“In our school, there is an encouragement of open communication among students, parents, and staff from various cultural backgrounds to cultivate a more inclusive and harmonious school environment. Promoting dialogue and understanding make sure that everyone feels acknowledged and appreciated.” Informant 5

“In school, there are forums where teachers and students can engage in discussions about cultural inclusivity,

creating a space for open dialogue and shared learning. These conversations help pinpoint challenges, enhance understanding, and generate ideas for cultivating a more inclusive school environment.” Informant 17

“Also, he promotes multilingual communication in school notices and announcements to ensure that all students and parents can access important information.” Informant 19

The finding implies that school leaders are crucial in fostering inclusivity by actively engaging diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes. Involving parents, teachers, and students in discussions about cultural inclusion ensures that the school environment reflects the collective values of the community. This collaborative approach promotes mutual respect, trust, and a stronger sense of belonging, ultimately creating an educational experience that celebrates and supports cultural diversity.

This connects to the conclusion of Igcasama (2023) that to effectively lead in culturally diverse communities, school leaders must adapt their communication and collaboration practices to ensure inclusivity and equity. This entails creating open channels for dialogue that respect linguistic and cultural differences, promoting multilingual communication to enhance accessibility, and engaging stakeholders from diverse backgrounds in meaningful decision-making processes. Fostering an environment of trust and mutual respect can bridge cultural gaps and empower all members of the community to contribute to the school's vision. Proactive measures such as organizing forums, implementing culturally responsive policies, and encouraging collaboration ensure that diversity is not only recognized but celebrated, cultivating a harmonious and unified educational environment.

Table 3: Themes on teachers' perspectives on culturally responsive leadership practices of school heads

Global Themes	Basic Themes	Core Ideas
Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices	Inclusivity and Cultural Respect	9. Honor and Celebrate Cultural Diversity 10. Inclusive Decision-Making 11. Culturally Responsive Teaching 12. Consultation with indigenous or Moro leaders
	Equitable and Supportive Environment	a. Equitable Policies and Practices b. Addressing Discrimination and Bias c. Support for Diverse Learners
	Empowered Cultural Collaboration and Communication	1. Parent and Community Involvement 2. Fostering Dialogue and Collaboration

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study. Based on data gathered, conclusions are formulated together with the recommendations.

the study explored teachers' perspectives on culturally responsive leadership through focus group discussions. Three key themes emerged: (1) Inclusivity and Cultural Respect, reflecting school leaders' efforts to celebrate diversity, integrate cultural practices, and consult minority leaders in policymaking; (2) Equitable and Supportive Environment, highlighting equal access to resources, fair policies, and professional development in cultural competency; and (3) Empowered Cultural Collaboration and

Communication, emphasizing inclusive dialogue, multilingual communication, and active engagement with parents and communities. Teachers described how these practices created a supportive school climate that promoted cultural expression, mutual respect, and inclusivity in both policy and pedagogy. These narratives formed the basis for the succeeding quantitative analysis.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

In Phase 1, it was concluded that teachers perceived culturally responsive leadership among their school heads to be demonstrated through inclusivity and cultural respect, equitable and supportive environments, and empowered cultural collaboration and communication. The findings revealed that school leaders actively honored cultural diversity, involved community voices in decision-making, and encouraged the integration of students' cultural backgrounds in teaching practices. These efforts fostered a sense of belonging, trust, and collaboration within the school community. The study further concluded that open communication and community engagement served as essential foundations for cultivating inclusive school cultures where all stakeholders felt valued and respected.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

For Teachers:

Integrate culturally relevant teaching strategies that reflect and honor students' diverse backgrounds to foster inclusivity and enhance student engagement.

Participate in targeted professional development programs that build cultural competency and equip teachers with inclusive pedagogical practices.

For School Heads:

Sustain equitable and supportive school environments by implementing policies that ensure fair access to leadership roles, learning resources, and student support services.

Promote meaningful collaboration with parents, community leaders, and staff through open, multilingual, and culturally inclusive communication strategies.

For Policymakers:

Institutionalize culturally responsive leadership training in licensure and in-service programs to build the capacity of school leaders in diverse settings.

Allocate resources for schools to implement inclusive events, translation services, and instructional materials that reflect cultural diversity.

For Future Researchers:

Despite the insights provided by this study regarding the positive impact of culturally responsive leadership on teacher retention and student inclusivity, there remains a research gap in understanding how the specific cultural backgrounds of both students and teachers influence the implementation and effectiveness of these leadership practices. Future research could explore the intersectionality of cultural identity, leadership styles, and school outcomes, focusing on how cultural diversity among staff and students affects the success of inclusive policies and practices in different school settings.

To further refine the findings in Phase 2 of this study, factorial analysis conducted to identify appropriate groupings and uncover distinct dimensions within culturally responsive leadership.

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