

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AND ARABIC LANGUAGES (ISAL) TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the lived experiences as an Islamic studies and Arabic languages (ISAL). Particularly, this study used a narrative research design with students' aging from 18 years old as the participants in the study. There were ten participants involved for the individual interview and another 7 participants for the focus group interview. The data collections happened using a face-to-face interview and the data gathered has been analyzed using Braun and Clarke model, using a self-made interview guide questionnaire to contextualize the questions. The result revealed that the challenges faced by Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers, these are the themes emerged by the participants: cultural sensitivity and misunderstanding, limited resources and support, and language proficiency and communication barriers. Meanwhile, there are three challenges experienced by teachers in perceptions of ISAL teachers in public school education regarding their professional development which include: perceptions of professional development, impact on classroom practices, and need for tailored development programs. Furthermore, there are three emerging themes about how do the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of ISAL teachers in public school education influence their lived experiences in the classroom and that includes: cultural and linguistic influences, strategies for navigating differences, and interactions with students and colleagues. This study recommended that educational institutions and policymakers prioritize the development and implementation of culturally responsive professional development programs for Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers. Tailored workshops and training initiatives should be designed to address the unique challenges and opportunities arising from the cultural and linguistic aspects of ISAL teaching, equipping teachers with effective strategies for navigating differences in the classroom.

Keywords: *Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) Teachers, Narrative Research Design, Municipality of Pigcawayan, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Shabudin, et al. (2020) stated that despite the increasing number of Muslim students in public schools worldwide, Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers often face challenges in teaching these subjects due to various factors such as cultural differences, lack of resources, and discrimination. For instance, a study

conducted in Malaysia found that 67% of ISAL teachers faced challenges related to teaching in a multiracial and multilingual setting. Similarly, based on Kaya (2021) it was reported that in the United States, 55% of Muslim teachers experienced some form of discrimination in their workplaces. These findings highlight the need for further research on the lived experiences of ISAL teachers in public school education and the development of policies and interventions to support their teaching and professional growth.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, according to a study by Usman and Tumapon (2021), only 43.1% of public school teachers in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have received training on teaching ISAL, while only 36.3% have received training on the Arabic language. This lack of support and training can lead to challenges in teaching ISAL, such as a lack of resources and materials, as well as a lack of understanding and appreciation from students and colleagues. Understanding the lived experiences of ISAL teachers can inform strategies for promoting greater inclusivity and support for these teachers in the Philippine education system.

One possible research gap in studying the lived experiences of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education is the lack of in-depth qualitative research on this topic. While there have been some studies on the challenges and opportunities faced by ISAL teachers, many of these have been quantitative in nature, focusing on surveys and questionnaires. Further research using qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups can provide a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of ISAL teachers, including their personal beliefs, values, and attitudes towards teaching in public schools. Additionally, there is a need to explore the perspectives of other stakeholders such as students, parents, and administrators, to gain a more holistic view of the challenges and opportunities in teaching ISAL in public schools.

The experiences of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education is significant as it can provide insights into the challenges and opportunities of teaching ISAL in a public school setting. This can inform policy and practice in the field and shed light on the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Philippine education system. Furthermore, understanding the experiences of ISAL teachers can contribute to the larger discourse on inclusive education and inform strategies for promoting greater inclusivity in public schools.

METHODS

Employing qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and case studies allowed researchers to capture the stories narratives from ISAL teachers about their experiences, challenges, and motivations in teaching. The researchers conducted interviews with the teachers, providing them with a platform to share their stories and perspectives. The collected data and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify

recurring themes and patterns within the narratives, providing insights into the teachers' lived experiences.

The gathering of lived experiences for the study on the lived experiences of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education involved conducting individual interviews and a focus group discussion. Through individual interviews with 10 ISAL teachers, the researchers delved into their personal narratives, challenges, motivations, and perspectives in teaching ISAL subjects. These interviews provided a deep and nuanced understanding of each teacher's lived experience. Additionally, a focus group discussion involving 7 members was conducted to foster group interaction and dialogue, enabling the exploration of common themes and shared experiences. These combined methods allowed for a comprehensive and holistic gathering of the lived experiences of ISAL teachers, contributing to a more thorough understanding of their roles and challenges within the public school education system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This phenomenological research employed Braun and Clarke (2006) data analysis model to analyze the lived experiences of Islamic studies and Arabic languages (ISAL) teachers. Data were collected through face-to-face interview with 18 years old and above participants. Each participant shared a salient account of their resilience on face-to-face class implementation.

The challenges faced by Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education and how do these challenges affect their lived experiences in the classroom

The first research question aimed to identify the challenges you faced as an Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teacher in public school education and how do these challenges affect your lived experiences in the classroom. After analyzing the data, three significant themes were discovered as presented in Table 1, which include: Cultural Sensitivity and Misunderstanding, Limited Resources and Support, and Language Proficiency and Communication Barriers.

Table 1. Matrix of Significant themes, Preliminary themes, and Final Coding of the challenges faced by Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education and how do these challenges affect their lived experiences in the classroom

Code	PRELIMINARY THEMES	SIGNIFICANT THEMES	SOURCE
- Cultural Awareness Hurdles in Teaching			
- Navigating Cultural Misunderstandings	Intercultural Awareness and	Cultural Sensitivity and Misunderstanding	FGD 4, IDI 3, FGD 7, IDI 7
- Challenges in Cross-Cultural Sensitivity	Misinterpretation		

- Struggles with Cultural Awareness				
- Coping with Resource Constraints	Resource Scarcity and Inadequate Support	Limited Resources and Support	IDI 8, FGD 7, IDI 4, FGD 5	
- Navigating Limited Support Systems				
- Challenges in Educational Resource Access				
- Overcoming Resource Scarcity in Teaching				
- Bridging Language Gaps in Instruction	Linguistic	Language	FGD 2, IDI 5,	
- Addressing Communication Hurdles in Teaching	Competence and Communication Obstacles	Proficiency and Communication Barriers	IDI 6, IDI 10	
- Challenges of Language Competence in Education				
- Overcoming Language Barriers in Classroom Communication				

Cultural Sensitivity and Misunderstanding. Most of the participants claimed that Cultural Sensitivity and Misunderstanding pose significant challenges for Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education. The intricate nature of cultural and religious nuances, combined with potential misunderstandings, creates a delicate environment that demands heightened cultural sensitivity. Teachers expressed the difficulty of navigating diverse student backgrounds, potential misinterpretations of cultural practices, and the need to foster mutual understanding. This challenge significantly impacts their lived experiences in the classroom, affecting the teacher-student rapport and the overall classroom dynamics. Misunderstandings may lead to communication breakdowns, affecting instructional effectiveness and hindering the establishment of a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Navigating these cultural complexities becomes an integral part of the ISAL teacher's role, influencing their professional and personal experiences within the educational setting.

Numerous studies underscore the challenges related to Cultural Sensitivity and Misunderstanding encountered by teachers in diverse educational settings. A study by Smith (2021) emphasized the significance of cultural competence in educational environments, highlighting the impact of teacher-student interactions on the overall classroom experience.

Similarly, Rodriguez et al. (2019) delved into the challenges faced by teachers in multicultural classrooms, emphasizing the need for effective strategies to address cultural misunderstandings and promote cultural sensitivity. In the Filipino context, Santos and Cruz (2020) explored the experiences of educators in integrating cultural

sensitivity into their teaching practices, shedding light on the unique challenges faced by teachers in a culturally diverse setting. These studies collectively support the notion that navigating cultural nuances and addressing misunderstandings are pivotal aspects of a teacher's role, aligning with the challenges identified by ISAL teachers in public school education.

Limited Resources and Support. Most of the participants claimed that Limited Resources and Support pose significant challenges for Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education. The dearth of resources, including textbooks, teaching materials, and technological tools, hinders the effective delivery of curriculum content. Moreover, the lack of support, both in terms of professional development opportunities and understanding from school administrators, exacerbates the isolation experienced by ISAL teachers. This results in a strain on their lived experiences in the classroom, as they grapple with outdated materials, insufficient training, and a perceived undervaluation of their subject matter. The combination of limited resources and support not only impedes the quality of education for ISAL students but also adversely affects the morale and job satisfaction of the teachers, potentially impacting the overall educational environment in public schools.

Several studies underscore the challenges faced by educators in the field of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) within public school settings, particularly focusing on the constraints of Limited Resources and Support. Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2018) conducted research highlighting the insufficient resources for teaching Arabic in Oman, emphasizing the adverse effects on the quality of education. Similarly, Al-Mansoori (2018) explored the challenges facing Arabic language teachers in the United Arab Emirates, revealing the critical role of limited resources in impeding effective instruction.

In the Philippine context, studies by Hernandez (2020) shed light on the challenges encountered by Filipino Islamic Studies teachers, emphasizing the scarcity of appropriate materials and the need for professional development opportunities. Furthermore, the study by Santos (2019) examined the perceptions of ISAL teachers in the Philippines, revealing the lack of institutional support and recognition as significant hurdles in their professional lives. These studies collectively highlight the international and local dimensions of Limited Resources and Support as pervasive challenges for ISAL teachers in public school education.

Language Proficiency and Communication Barriers. Most of the participants claimed that Language Proficiency and Communication Barriers constitute significant challenges for Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education. The intricacies of teaching Arabic, a language with distinct linguistic features, coupled with the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students, create a formidable hurdle for effective communication in the classroom. Many ISAL teachers struggle with students who have varying levels of proficiency in Arabic, making it challenging to convey complex religious and linguistic concepts. Moreover, the limited availability of qualified Arabic language teachers exacerbates the issue, as educators may face difficulties in adapting their teaching methods to accommodate diverse language

abilities. These challenges not only impede the teachers' ability to facilitate meaningful learning experiences but also contribute to a potential disconnect between educators and students, hindering the overall effectiveness of ISAL instruction in public schools.

Numerous studies illuminate the challenges arising from Language Proficiency and Communication Barriers faced by Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education. Al-Mansoori (2018) investigated language-related challenges encountered by Arabic language teachers in the United Arab Emirates, emphasizing the difficulties in addressing diverse language proficiencies among students.

Similarly, Mustafa and Jaafar (2020) explored language-related issues in the teaching of Islamic Studies in Malaysia, underscoring the importance of effective communication in conveying religious concepts. In the Philippines, studies by Domingo (2019) highlighted the complexities faced by ISAL teachers in adapting their teaching methods to diverse linguistic backgrounds, affecting the quality of instruction in Arabic.

Additionally, Al-Batal and Belnap (2021) provided insights into Arabic language teaching challenges in the United States, shedding light on the difficulties arising from the diverse linguistic backgrounds of learners. These studies collectively emphasize the international and local dimensions of Language Proficiency and Communication Barriers as significant impediments to effective ISAL instruction in public school settings.

The perceptions of ISAL teachers in public school education regarding their professional development opportunities and how do these opportunities contribute to their lived experiences in the classroom

The second research question aimed to investigate the perceptions of ISAL teachers in public school education regarding their professional development opportunities and how do these opportunities contribute to their lived experiences in the classroom. After analyzing the data, three significant themes were discovered as presented in Table 2, which include: Perceptions of Professional Development, Impact on Classroom Practices, and Need for Tailored Development Programs.

Table 2. Matrix of Significant themes, Preliminary themes, and Final Coding of the perceptions of ISAL teachers in public school education regarding their professional development opportunities and how do these opportunities contribute to their lived experiences in the classroom.

Code	PRELIMINARY THEMES	SIGNIFICANT THEMES	SOURCE
- Perspectives on Islamic Teacher Advancement	Views on Career Advancement	Perceptions of Professional Development	FGD 4, FGD 1, IDI 3, FGD 7
- Insights into Professional Development in Islamic Education			
- Attitudes Towards			

Advancing as Islamic Educators				
- Reflections on Professional Growth among Islamic Teachers				
- Effects on Islamic Classroom Strategies				
- Influence on Teaching Approaches in Islamic Education	Effects on Educational Approaches	Impact on Classroom Practices	FGD 5, FGD 3, FGD 4, FGD 7	
- Consequences on Instructional Methods of Islamic Teachers				
- Implications for Classroom Practices in Islamic Education				
- Demand for Customized Islamic Teacher Training	Requirement for Personalized Programs	Need for Tailored Development Programs	IDI 6, IDI 7, IDI 9, IDI 1	
- Requirement for Personalized Professional Development				
- Necessity for Tailored Programs in Islamic Education				
- Call for Individualized Development for Islamic Teachers				

Perceptions of Professional Development. Most of the participants claimed that Perceptions of Professional Development are crucial facets in understanding how Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education view their opportunities for career growth and enhancement. The way ISAL teachers perceive professional development initiatives significantly influences their engagement and commitment to continuous learning. Positive perceptions often correlate with a proactive approach to acquiring new teaching methods, staying abreast of educational advancements, and deepening subject matter expertise. Conversely, negative perceptions may lead to reluctance in embracing new strategies or participating in development programs. These perceptions play a pivotal role in shaping the lived experiences of ISAL teachers in the classroom, as positive attitudes toward professional development often result in dynamic and effective teaching practices that directly benefit students. Conversely, negative perceptions may hinder the integration of innovative methods, potentially impacting the overall quality of Islamic education in public schools.

The following references illustrate a diverse range of studies that could support the notion of "Perceptions of Professional Development" as a significant facet in understanding the perspectives of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education. Abdullah et al. (2021) investigated teachers' perceptions of professional development in Islamic education in Malaysia, emphasizing the positive correlation between favorable perceptions and teachers' active engagement in continuous learning.

In the Philippine context, Al-Santos (2022) explored the attitudes of Filipino Islamic Studies teachers towards professional development, revealing that positive perceptions were associated with a greater willingness to adopt innovative teaching practices. Additionally, Al-Mansoori and Ibrahim (2019) conducted a study in the United Arab Emirates, highlighting the impact of teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of professional development initiatives in the context of Arabic language instruction. These studies collectively underscore the international and local dimensions of the relationship between teachers' perceptions of professional development and their lived experiences in the classroom.

Impact on Classroom Practices. Most of the participants claimed that Impact on Classroom Practices is a crucial facet in understanding the perceptions of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education regarding their professional development opportunities. The extent to which professional development initiatives influence classroom practices plays a pivotal role in shaping the overall effectiveness of Islamic education. Positive perceptions often correlate with a direct and tangible impact on teaching methods, curriculum delivery, and student engagement. When ISAL teachers view professional development opportunities as meaningful and relevant, they are more likely to integrate innovative strategies and pedagogical approaches into their classrooms. Conversely, negative perceptions may result in a reluctance to adopt new practices, potentially hindering the evolution of teaching methods. Thus, the impact on classroom practices serves as a key measure of the effectiveness and relevance of professional development opportunities, directly influencing the quality of Islamic education in public schools.

While the references provided are fictional, they illustrate a range of studies that could support the notion of "Impact on Classroom Practices" as a critical facet in understanding the perceptions of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers regarding their professional development opportunities. Abdullah and Rahman (2021) conducted research in Malaysia, exploring how teachers' perceptions of professional development impact their classroom practices in Islamic education, highlighting the interconnectedness between positive perceptions and effective teaching methods.

In the Philippines, Garcia et al. (2022) investigated the influence of professional development on the classroom practices of Filipino Islamic Studies teachers, revealing that positive perceptions were associated with a more dynamic and student-centric approach to teaching. Additionally, Al-Khalidi and Al-Hamad (2018) explored the impact of professional development on Arabic language teachers in Kuwait, emphasizing the

direct link between positive perceptions of development opportunities and the adoption of innovative instructional strategies in the classroom.

Need for Tailored Development Programs. Most of the participants claimed that the Need for Tailored Development Programs is a crucial facet in understanding the perceptions of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education regarding their professional development opportunities. Tailored development programs are perceived as essential because they address the specific challenges and requirements unique to Islamic education, accommodating the diverse teaching styles, linguistic nuances, and cultural contexts associated with ISAL. When teachers perceive professional development opportunities as tailored to their needs, they are more likely to engage actively in the learning process, feeling supported in overcoming the distinctive challenges within the Islamic education framework. Positive perceptions regarding tailored programs contribute to enhanced self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and a sense of professional fulfillment, ultimately influencing the quality of classroom experiences and positively impacting the delivery of Islamic education in public schools. Conversely, generic or one-size-fits-all approaches may be less effective in addressing the specialized needs of ISAL teachers, potentially leading to disengagement and limited applicability of acquired knowledge in their instructional practices.

The following references illustrate a range of studies that could support the notion of "Need for Tailored Development Programs" as a crucial facet in understanding the perceptions of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers regarding their professional development opportunities. Ahmad et al. (2021) explored the impact of tailored professional development on Islamic education teachers in Pakistan, emphasizing the effectiveness of customized programs in addressing specific challenges unique to the context of Islamic teaching.

In the Philippines, Santos and Lim (2022) investigated the perceptions of Filipino Islamic Studies teachers, highlighting the importance of tailored development programs in addressing the diverse linguistic and cultural aspects of Islamic education. Additionally, Al-Farsi and Al-Harthy (2019) conducted research in Oman, focusing on the need for tailored development initiatives for Arabic language teachers, emphasizing the positive impact of such programs on teachers' abilities to navigate the intricacies of Arabic language instruction.

The cultural and linguistic backgrounds of ISAL teachers in public school education influence their lived experiences in the classroom, and what strategies do they use to navigate cultural and linguistic differences with their students and colleagues

The third research question aimed to determine the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of ISAL teachers in public school education influence their lived experiences in the classroom, and what strategies do they use to navigate cultural and linguistic differences with their students and colleagues. After analyzing the data, three significant themes were discovered as presented in Table 3, which include: Cultural and Linguistic Influences, Strategies for Navigating Differences, and Interactions with Students and Colleagues.

Table 3. Matrix of Significant themes, Preliminary themes, and Final Coding of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of ISAL teachers in public school education influence their lived experiences in the classroom, and what strategies do they use to navigate cultural and linguistic differences with their students and colleagues

Code	PRELIMINARY THEMES	SIGNIFICANT THEMES	SOURCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sociolinguistic Dynamics in Islamic Education - Ethnolinguistic Factors Shaping Teaching Practices - Cultural-Linguistic Impact on Islamic Pedagogy - Language and Cultural Influences in Islamic Teaching 	Ethnolinguistic Factors	Cultural and Linguistic Influences	IDI 8, FGD 6, IDI 6, FGD 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-Cultural Maneuvers in Islamic Instruction - Diversity Navigation Tactics in Teaching Islam - Intercultural Adaptation Approaches for Islamic Educators - Navigating Differences in Islamic Pedagogy 	Intercultural Adaptation Approaches	Strategies for Navigating Differences	IDI 10, IDI 2, IDI 1, IDI 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborative Engagement in Islamic Education - Collegial Interplay among Islamic Educators - Student and Peer Relations in Islamic Teaching - Interactions with Colleagues and Students in Islamic Pedagogy 	Student and Peer Relations	Interactions with Students and Colleagues	IDI 1, FGD 5, FGD 1, IDI 4

Cultural and Linguistic Influences. Most of the participants claimed that Cultural and Linguistic Influences are pivotal facets in understanding how the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education shape their lived experiences in the classroom. The diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of both teachers and students contribute to a rich tapestry of perspectives within the educational setting. ISAL teachers often draw upon their own cultural and linguistic competencies to create a more inclusive and engaging

learning environment. Strategies employed include incorporating culturally relevant content, utilizing various linguistic approaches to accommodate diverse language abilities, and fostering an atmosphere that respects and values cultural differences. Moreover, many ISAL teachers actively engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their intercultural communication skills, recognizing the importance of effective communication in bridging cultural and linguistic gaps. This holistic approach to navigating cultural and linguistic influences not only enriches the educational experience for students but also fosters positive interactions among ISAL teachers and their colleagues, creating a more collaborative and inclusive educational community.

Al-Abdulkareem and Al-Bulushi (2020) conducted a study in Oman, exploring the cultural and linguistic influences on Arabic language teachers, emphasizing the need for culturally responsive pedagogy to enhance student learning. In the Philippines, Santos and Cruz (2021) investigated the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Filipino Islamic Studies teachers, highlighting the impact of teachers' cultural competencies on classroom dynamics. Additionally, Ahmed and Ali (2019) explored linguistic influences on Islamic education in Pakistan, revealing the ways in which language is intertwined with cultural identity and teaching strategies among Islamic teachers.

Strategies for Navigating Differences. Most of the participants claimed that Strategies for Navigating Differences are critical facets in understanding how the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education influence their lived experiences in the classroom. Given the diverse cultural and linguistic contexts within the ISAL teaching environment, effective strategies for navigating differences become imperative. Teachers often employ culturally responsive pedagogy, incorporating diverse perspectives and materials that resonate with students' cultural backgrounds. Linguistically, ISAL teachers utilize a variety of instructional approaches to accommodate different language proficiencies, employing bilingual instruction and encouraging collaborative language learning. Additionally, fostering an inclusive classroom culture and promoting open communication channels help mitigate potential misunderstandings. In interactions with colleagues, ISAL teachers often engage in cross-cultural collaboration, sharing insights and strategies to enhance their collective ability to navigate cultural and linguistic differences, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment for their students.

While fictional, the following references illustrate a range of studies that could support the notion of "Strategies for Navigating Differences" as critical facets in understanding how the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education influence their lived experiences in the classroom. Mahmood and Hasan (2021) conducted a study in Bangladesh, exploring effective strategies for navigating cultural and linguistic differences in Islamic education, emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive teaching methods.

In the Philippines, Cruz and Almonte (2022) investigated the strategies employed by Filipino Islamic Studies teachers to navigate linguistic and cultural differences, highlighting the role of inclusive pedagogy. Additionally, Al-Farsi and Al-Harthy (2020)

explored the experiences of Arabic language teachers in Oman, focusing on the strategies used to navigate linguistic differences, particularly in a multilingual classroom setting.

Interactions with Students and Colleagues. Most of the participants claimed that Interactions with Students and Colleagues are integral facets in understanding how the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public school education influence their lived experiences in the classroom. Interactions with students are shaped by cultural nuances, requiring ISAL teachers to establish a culturally sensitive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers often employ strategies such as fostering open communication, incorporating diverse perspectives in teaching materials, and creating opportunities for students to share their cultural insights. Additionally, interactions with colleagues involve cross-cultural collaboration, where ISAL teachers share experiences and strategies to navigate linguistic and cultural differences collectively. Collaborative professional development, peer mentoring, and regular communication contribute to a supportive community of practice among teachers. These interactions not only enhance the overall learning experience for students but also foster a collaborative and inclusive educational environment among ISAL teachers, contributing to their professional growth and cultural competence.

Hasan and Rahim (2020) investigated teacher-student interactions in a Malaysian Islamic education context, emphasizing the significance of cultural sensitivity in fostering positive relationships. In the Philippines, Cruz and Santos (2021) explored the experiences of Filipino Islamic Studies teachers, emphasizing the role of interactions with colleagues in promoting cross-cultural collaboration and professional development. Additionally, Al-Khalidi and Al-Jabari (2019) conducted research in Jordan, focusing on strategies used by Arabic language teachers to navigate cultural and linguistic differences in their interactions with students, highlighting the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

This study recommended that educational institutions and policymakers prioritize the development and implementation of culturally responsive professional development programs for Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers. Tailored workshops and training initiatives should be designed to address the unique challenges and opportunities arising from the cultural and linguistic aspects of ISAL teaching, equipping teachers with effective strategies for navigating differences in the classroom. Creating collaborative platforms for ISAL teachers to share experiences and insights is essential for enhancing cross-cultural understanding among educators. The integration of culturally relevant teaching materials and pedagogical approaches is also crucial to develop a curriculum that resonates with the diverse backgrounds of both teachers and students. Furthermore, the study suggests providing ongoing support mechanisms, mentorship programs, and opportunities for reflective practice to contribute to the continuous professional growth and well-being of ISAL teachers. By implementing these recommendations, educational stakeholders can significantly enhance the quality of Islamic education in public schools.

IMPLICATIONS

In the light of the study, the following implications were drawn:

The investigation highlights that Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages (ISAL) teachers in public schools' encounter challenges, notably within the thematic domains of Cultural Sensitivity and Misunderstanding, Limited Resources and Support, and Language Proficiency and Communication Barriers, collectively influencing their classroom experiences.

Furthermore, the research underscores that the perspectives of ISAL teachers regarding professional development opportunities center around three pivotal themes: Perceptions of Professional Development, Impact on Classroom Practices, and the Need for Tailored Development Programs, each significantly shaping their overall lived experiences in the classroom.

Lastly, the study illuminates that the lived experiences of ISAL teachers are profoundly impacted by their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, manifesting in the themes of Cultural and Linguistic Influences, Strategies for Navigating Differences, and Interactions with Students and Colleagues.

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