

Culturally Responsive Leadership in Education: Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion In School Administration

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Abstract — This study investigates the perceptions of culturally responsive leadership (CRL) among school heads and teachers in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion within public schools. Culturally responsive leadership plays a vital role in shaping inclusive school environments, yet its effectiveness often hinges on the alignment between leadership intentions and the lived experiences of staff. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, the research explores the alignment between leadership intentions and staff experiences, with particular attention to the perceived effectiveness of inclusive practices and professional development. Findings reveal a consistent perceptual gap: school heads rated their performance significantly higher across CRL domains compared to teachers, suggesting that leadership efforts may not fully resonate at the classroom level. Notably, both groups identified cultural competence as the weakest dimension of CRL, highlighting a critical need for deeper engagement with issues of identity, bias, and systemic inequality. Moreover, while equity-driven decision-making and stakeholder collaboration were rated moderately, inconsistencies in implementation and limited support for marginalized students underscore the challenges of translating inclusive policy into practice. Statistical analysis further showed that demographic and professional variables such as age, sex, experience, and educational attainment had no significant influence on CRL perceptions, challenging traditional assumptions about leadership preparedness. The study concludes that culturally responsive leadership must be grounded in transformational qualities such as reflective practice, ethical commitment, and collaborative engagement rather than professional tenure or demographic profiles. Based on these findings, the study recommends rethinking leadership development models to prioritize equity-driven competencies, strengthen feedback mechanisms, institutionalize culturally responsive policies, and enhance direct support for marginalized students. Ultimately, achieving inclusive education requires systemic alignment between leadership behavior, institutional culture, and community partnership.

Keywords — *Culturally Responsive Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion, Educational Equity, School Leadership Perceptions, & Professional Development*

I. Introduction

This study explores culturally responsive leadership as a vital approach to fostering diversity and inclusion in education. While global research highlights its positive impact on marginalized students' academic outcomes, many school systems—including those in the Philippines—continue to face challenges such as systemic bias, limited professional development, and poor policy implementation. Despite national initiatives like the K-12 curriculum and the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program, gaps remain in aligning policy with local practice.

In the Getafe 2 District of Bohol, school leaders often struggle with limited resources and competing responsibilities, hindering their ability to fully implement inclusive leadership strategies. The study aims to evaluate the current practices, identify barriers, and propose interventions to strengthen culturally responsive leadership in the district's schools.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to investigate the culturally responsive leadership of school heads as provided by the respondent groups along the premise of equity and inclusion in District of Getafe I, Schools Division of Bohol during the School Year 2024-2025.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the school heads;

- 1.1 age;
- 1.2 sex;
- 1.3 highest educational attainment;
- 1.4 designation/position;
- 1.5 administrative experience; and
- 1.6 number of reelevate trainings/seminars attended?

1.2 teachers;

- 1.2.1 age;
- 1.2.2 sex;
- 1.2.3 highest educational attainment;
- 1.2.4 designation/position;
- 1.2.5 administrative experience; and
- 1.2.6 number of relevant trainings/ seminars attended?

2. As perceived by the respondent groups, what is the school heads' level of culturally responsive leadership along diversity and equity in terms of:

- 2.1 cultural competence of school leaders;
- 2.2 equity- driven decision-making;

- 2.3 representation and inclusive leadership; and
- 2.4 professional development on diversity?
3. As perceived by the respondent groups, what is the school heads' level of culturally responsive leadership in advancing inclusion in terms of:
 - 3.1 inclusive policy implementation;
 - 3.2 support for marginalized groups; and
 - 3.3 collaboration with stakeholders?
4. Is there a significant relationship on the profile of the respondent groups and their perceived school heads' level of culturally responsive leadership along diversity and equity?
5. Is there a significant relationship on the profile of the respondent groups and their perceived school heads' level of culturally responsive leadership in advancing inclusion?
6. Based on the findings, what training plan can be proposed?

II. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to investigate culturally responsive leadership in education, focusing on diversity and inclusion in school administration. The descriptive component assessed school heads' and teachers' leadership responses related to cultural competence, equity-driven decision-making, inclusive policies, and stakeholder collaboration. The correlational aspect examined the relationships between respondents' profiles—such as age, sex, educational attainment, and administrative experience—and their leadership practices. Data were collected through surveys and structured interviews using validated questionnaires. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage, standard deviation) were used to summarize the data, while correlational analyses (Pearson's r , chi-square, or regression analysis) identified significant relationships among variables. This approach enabled a systematic evaluation of leadership practices and supported the development of targeted training programs to enhance culturally responsive school leadership.

2.1 Procedure

Research permissions were first secured from the Schools Division Office and participating schools to conduct the study among school heads and teachers. A validated survey questionnaire was developed, pre-tested, and revised based on expert feedback to ensure clarity and relevance. The finalized questionnaire was then distributed, either physically or electronically, to respondents actively engaged in educational settings. Participants were given adequate time to complete the

survey, with follow-ups conducted to improve response rates. After collecting the data, they were organized, encoded, and analyzed using statistical tools to generate insights that would guide the development of a training plan aimed at strengthening school leadership in inclusive education.

2.2 Data Processing

The collected data were systematically analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to address the research questions. Descriptive statistics—such as frequency and percentage—summarized respondents' demographic profiles, while mean and standard deviation measured the level of leadership responses related to diversity and inclusion, interpreted using a five-point scale. Mean scores were computed for key diversity dimensions (cultural competence, equity-driven decision-making, representation, professional development) and inclusion dimensions (policy implementation, support for marginalized groups, stakeholder collaboration). Inferential analyses, including Pearson's and Spearman's correlations, t-tests, and One-Way ANOVA with post-hoc tests, were used to examine relationships and differences across demographic variables. The findings were interpreted alongside existing literature to identify patterns and gaps, ultimately informing the design of training programs to enhance inclusive leadership in schools.

III. Results and Discussion

This section presented the demographic profile of the school heads, including their age, sex, highest educational attainment, designation or position, length of administrative experience, and the number of relevant trainings or seminars attended. The results are detailed in the following tables.

The age distribution of school heads showed that 50% were aged 46 and above, with 21.4% each in the 41–45 and 36–40 age brackets, and only 7.1% aged 31–35. This indicated a generally experienced leadership group, though adaptability to diverse student needs remained essential. A majority (71.4%) were female, reflecting broader trends in education, while 28.6% were male. In terms of civil status, 85.7% were married, with single and widowed respondents each comprising 7.1%.

Regarding educational attainment, 57.1% had earned units toward a master's degree, 28.6% had doctoral units, while only 7.1% had completed either a master's or doctoral degree. In terms of position, principals and school-in-charge leaders each represented 42.9%, and 14.3% were head teachers. Most respondents (64.3%) had 1–5 years of administrative experience, suggesting a relatively new leadership cohort. Lastly, 71.4% had attended 4–6 relevant trainings or seminars, while 28.6% attended 1–3, showing active engagement in professional development.

These findings underscored the need for targeted, culturally responsive training and mentorship to support inclusive and equity-focused school leadership.

Table 2 Frequency Distribution on the Demographic Profile of the School Heads

Age	Frequency	Percent
46>	7	50.0%
41-45	3	21.4%
36-40	3	21.4%
31-35	1	7.1%
Total	14	100.0%
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	4	28.6%
Female	10	71.4%
Total	14	100.0%
Civil Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	1	7.1%
Married	12	85.7%
Widowed	1	7.1%
Total	14	100.0%
Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percent
Doctorate Degree	1	7.1%
Doctorate Degree-Units	4	28.6%
Master's Degree	1	7.1%
Master's Degree-Units	8	57.1%
Total	14	100.0%
Position/Designation	Frequency	Percent
Principal	6	42.9%
School In-Charge	6	42.9%
Head Teacher	2	14.3%
Total	14	100.0%
Administrative Experience	Frequency	Percent
11-15	2	14.3%
6-10	3	21.4%
1-5	9	64.3%
Total	14	100.0%
Number of Relevant Trainings/Seminars Attended	Frequency	Percent
4-6	10	71.4%
1-3	4	28.6%
Total	14	100.0%

This section presents the demographic profile of the teachers in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, designation/position, length of teaching experience, and number of relevant trainings/ seminars attended. The results are shown below.

The age distribution of teachers reflected a relatively young workforce, with the largest group aged 36–40 (26.0%), followed by those aged 25–30 (22.8%) and 31–35 (18.7%). This suggested openness to new pedagogical approaches, though strong leadership support was needed to guide inclusive practices. The gender profile showed a female-dominated group (91.9%), raising considerations about gender balance and its impact on educational dynamics.

In terms of educational attainment, 62.6% had earned units toward a master’s degree, 12.2% had completed a master’s, and 9.8% had begun doctoral studies, while 15.4% still held only a bachelor’s degree. This pointed to a general trend of academic advancement, though deeper training in multicultural education remained necessary. Most teachers held the rank of Teacher III (61.0%), with 30.1% as Teacher I, indicating limited access to higher designations, which could restrict influence in implementing inclusive practices.

Teaching experience was fairly evenly distributed, with 32.5% having 6–10 years and 27.6% with 1–5 years of experience. While newer teachers offered fresh perspectives, they required ongoing mentorship and institutional support. Notably, over half (55.3%) had attended only 1–3 relevant trainings on inclusive education, showing a significant gap in professional development despite the inclusive goals of national programs like K–12 and IPEd.

Overall, while the teacher demographic indicated strong potential for culturally responsive practices, persistent barriers such as limited training, rigid hierarchies, and uneven policy implementation highlighted the need for proactive and supportive school leadership to promote genuine inclusivity in education.

Table 3 Frequency Distribution on the Demographic Profile of the Teachers

Age	Frequency	Percent
46>	19	15.4%
41-45	21	17.1%
36-40	32	26.0%
31-35	23	18.7%
25-30	28	22.8%
Total	123	100.0%
Sex	Frequency	Percent
male	10	8.1%
female	113	91.9%
Total	123	100.0%
Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percent
Doctorate Degree-Units	12	9.8%
Master's Degree	15	12.2%
Master's Degree-Units	77	62.6%
Bachelor's Degree	19	15.4%
Total	123	100.0%
Position/Designation	Frequency	Percent
Master Teacher II	1	.8%
Master Teacher I	2	1.6%
Teacher III	75	61.0%
Teacher II	8	6.5%
Teacher I	37	30.1%
Total	123	100.0%
Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percent
16>	22	17.9%
11-15	27	22.0%
6-10	40	32.5%
1-5	34	27.6%
Total	123	100.0%

Number of Relevant Trainings/Seminars Attended	Frequency	Percent
7-9	15	12.2%
4-6	40	32.5%
1-3	68	55.3%
Total	123	100.0%

Table 8 summarized the overall level of perceived culturally responsive leadership among school heads, with a grand mean of 3.58, indicating a “high” level. Among the four domains assessed, Professional Development on Diversity received the highest rating (mean = 3.77), followed by Representation and Inclusive Leadership (3.69), Equity-Driven Decision-Making (3.53), and Cultural Competence (3.31), which was the only domain rated as “moderate.”

These results suggested that while school leaders actively supported inclusivity and professional development, their foundational cultural competence remained underdeveloped. As noted by Cross et al. (2016), cultural competence serves as the foundation for effective responsive leadership. The data implied that despite good intentions, school heads may lack the self-awareness and cultural fluency necessary for fully implementing inclusive practices, as emphasized by Lindsey et al. (2018).

Overall, the findings reflected a leadership profile that was partially equipped and in progress. Strengthening cultural competence among school heads was deemed essential to enhance the impact of existing equity policies and diversity programs. Embedding this competence into leadership training and institutional frameworks was recommended to sustain truly transformative and inclusive learning environments.

Table 8 Summary Results on the Level of School Heads’ Perceived Level of Culturally Responsive Leadership Along Diversity and Equity

Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Professional Development on Diversity	14	3.77	0.70	High
Representation and Inclusive Leadership	14	3.69	1.03	High
Equity- Driven Decision-Making	14	3.53	0.91	High
Cultural Competence of School Leaders	14	3.31	1.34	Moderate
Grand Mean	14	3.58	1.00	High

Legend	Range	Description
	4.21-5.00	Very High
	3.41-4.20	High
	2.61-3.40	Moderate
	1.81-2.60	Low
	1.00-1.80	Very Low

Table 13 confirmed that teachers perceived school leaders’ culturally responsive leadership as moderate overall, with a grand mean of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.93. Among the four dimensions, Professional Development on Diversity received the highest mean (3.29), while Cultural Competence scored the lowest (2.91). This indicated that leadership was more evident in formal training efforts than in internalized cultural understanding or interpersonal practice.

Moderate ratings across all dimensions—Equity-Driven Decision-Making (3.22), Representation and Inclusion (3.16), and Cultural Competence (2.91)—suggested that while progress had been made, it was insufficient to establish a deeply inclusive school culture. Teachers recognized the effort but did not perceive a strong, systemic impact.

As noted by Villegas and Lucas (2016), the underdevelopment of cultural competence limited the effectiveness of diversity initiatives. Khalifa et al. (2016) also emphasized the importance of integrating teacher and student experiences into leadership strategies. The moderate perception from teachers suggested a gap between inclusive policies and their lived realities in schools.

To address this, school leaders were encouraged to embed cultural competence into their leadership identity and bridge the disconnect between policy and practice, ensuring that diversity efforts were context-specific, consistent, and collaborative.

Table 13 Summary Results on the Level of Teachers’ Perceived Level of Culturally Responsive Leadership Along Diversity and Equity

Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Professional Development on Diversity	123	3.29	0.96	Moderate
Equity- Driven Decision-Making	123	3.22	0.81	Moderate
Representation and Inclusive Leadership	123	3.16	0.76	Moderate
Cultural Competence of School Leaders	123	2.91	1.19	Moderate
Grand Mean	123	3.15	0.93	Moderate

Legend	Range	Description
	4.21-5.00	Very High
	3.41-4.20	High
	2.61-3.40	Moderate
	1.81-2.60	Low
	1.00-1.80	Very Low

Table 17 revealed that school heads perceived their overall culturally responsive leadership in promoting inclusion at a moderate level, with a grand mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 0.96. Among the three domains assessed, Inclusive Policy Implementation received the highest rating (3.60, high), followed by Collaboration with Stakeholders (3.30, moderate), and Support for Marginalized Groups (3.19, moderate).

This distribution suggested that while inclusive policies were in place and valued by school leaders, their implementation through stakeholder collaboration and targeted support for marginalized groups remained limited. The gap between policy and practice underscored a weakness in translating structural frameworks into effective, equitable action.

These findings aligned with the concerns of Galloway and Ishimaru (2017), who argued that genuine equity leadership required more than policy—it demanded confronting systemic practices that sustained disparities. Likewise, Skrla et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of

data-driven strategies. The variation across domains highlighted a need for more consistent, data-informed approaches to inclusivity.

In conclusion, although school leaders showed confidence in policy implementation, the study pointed to the need for more deliberate efforts to ensure those policies translated into tangible, equitable outcomes for marginalized and underrepresented learners.

Table 17 Summary Results on the Level of School Heads’ Perceived Level of Culturally Responsive Leadership in Advancing Inclusion

Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Inclusive Policy Implementation	14	3.60	0.90	Moderate
Collaboration with Stakeholders	14	3.30	1.03	Moderate
Support for Marginalized Groups	14	3.19	0.95	Moderate
Grand Mean	14	3.36	0.96	Moderate

Legend	Range	Description
	4.21-5.00	Very High
	3.41-4.20	High
	2.61-3.40	Moderate
	1.81-2.60	Low
	1.00-1.80	Very Low

Table 21 showed that teachers perceived culturally responsive leadership in advancing inclusion at a moderate level, with a grand mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 0.91. Among the three domains, Collaboration with Stakeholders was rated highest ($M = 3.39$), followed by Support for Marginalized Groups ($M = 3.15$), and Inclusive Policy Implementation ($M = 3.10$).

This ranking indicated that teachers viewed external collaboration more favorably than internal policy execution or support systems for marginalized students. While stakeholder engagement appeared visible, institutional structures and policy enforcement were perceived as less robust.

These results supported the views of Theoharis (2018), who stressed that inclusive policies must be actively implemented and assessed for real impact. Similarly, Khalifa et al. (2016) highlighted that without data-driven practices, culturally responsive leadership risked being symbolic rather than transformative.

In conclusion, the findings underscored the need for school leadership to adopt a more holistic approach—integrating community collaboration with strong institutional support, policy accountability, and reflective, data-informed practices—to genuinely advance inclusive education.

Table 21 Summary Results on the Level of Teachers’ Perceived Level of Culturally Responsive Leadership in Advancing Inclusion

Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Collaboration with Stakeholders	123	3.39	0.97	Moderate
Support for Marginalized Groups	123	3.15	0.86	Moderate
Inclusive Policy Implementation	123	3.10	0.89	Moderate
Grand Mean	123	3.21	0.91	Moderate

Legend	Range	Description
	4.21-5.00	Very High
	3.41-4.20	High
	2.61-3.40	Moderate
	1.81-2.60	Low
	1.00-1.80	Very Low

This section presents the test of relationships on the profile of the school heads and their perceived level of culturally responsive leadership along diversity and equity. The results are displayed below.

The statistical analysis in Table 22 presented a Model Summary examining the relationship between the school heads’ profiles and their perceived level of culturally responsive leadership (CRL) in diversity and equity. The model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.759, indicating a moderately strong linear relationship among the variables. The R Square value of 0.576 showed that 57.6% of the variance in perceived CRL could be explained by profile variables such as age, gender, educational attainment, and years of experience.

However, the Adjusted R Square dropped significantly to 0.212, suggesting that the model's explanatory power declined when accounting for the number of predictors. This reduction implied possible overfitting or the inclusion of variables with minimal contribution to the model's overall predictive capability.

Table 22 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.759	.576	.212	.487

The ANOVA results in Table 23 assessed the statistical significance of the regression model. The F-value was 1.584 with a corresponding p-value of 0.280, which exceeded the standard significance threshold of 0.05. This indicated that the model was not statistically significant, suggesting that the combined profile variables of the school heads did not significantly predict their perceived level of culturally responsive leadership (CRL).

Despite the variance explained in the previous table, the lack of statistical robustness implied that other unmeasured factors likely played a more influential role in shaping perceptions of leadership in diversity and equity. These results suggested that personal and professional characteristics alone were insufficient predictors of CRL effectiveness. Contextual and

institutional factors—such as school culture, district policies, targeted training, and stakeholder involvement—may have had greater influence. This finding aligned with the perspectives of Gay (2020) and Lindsey et al. (2018), who emphasized that effective culturally responsive leadership stems from intentional development, critical reflection, and continuous learning rather than demographic attributes alone.

Table 23 ANOVA Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.254	6	.376	1.584	.280
	Residual	1.660	7	.237		
	Total	3.914	13			

Table 24 presented the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the relationship between school heads' profile variables and their perceived level of culturally responsive leadership (CRL) in the areas of diversity and equity. The analysis revealed that none of the profile variables significantly predicted CRL levels, as all p-values exceeded the 0.05 significance threshold. For example, age had a Beta coefficient of 0.898 with a p-value of 0.306, and educational attainment had a negative Beta of -2.107 with a p-value of 0.086—both statistically non-significant.

Among the predictors, only training and seminar attendance approached significance, with a p-value of 0.060 and a negative Beta of -1.304. While still not statistically significant, this variable hinted at a possible trend, suggesting that increased training attendance did not necessarily equate to higher perceptions of CRL. This finding supported Shields' (2018) assertion that effective inclusive leadership requires more than surface-level qualifications; it demands critical reflection and practical application of equity principles.

Additionally, neither position/designation ($p = 0.160$) nor administrative experience ($p = 0.207$) significantly influenced CRL perceptions. These results underscored that leadership effectiveness in diversity and equity is not inherently tied to rank or tenure. Rather, as Theoharis (2021) emphasized, genuine equity leadership must be rooted in moral purpose and strategic action.

Overall, the analysis suggested that demographic and professional variables alone did not account for variations in culturally responsive leadership. Instead, the findings aligned with broader research indicating that intentionality, self-awareness, and contextual responsiveness were more critical. These results highlighted the need for leadership development programs to prioritize transformative, equity-centered training rather than relying solely on structural qualifications.

Table 24 Multiple Regression Analysis on test of relationship on the profile of the school heads and their perceived level of culturally responsive leadership along diversity and equity

Variables	Beta	p-value	Decision
Age	.898	.306	Not Significant
Sex	.104	.841	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	-2.107	.086	Not Significant
Position/Designation	1.297	.160	Not Significant
Administrative Experience	1.064	.207	Not Significant
Number of Relevant Trainings/Seminars Attended	-1.304	.060	Not Significant

The results presented in Table 33 revealed that various teacher demographic variables did not significantly predict their perceived level of culturally responsive leadership in advancing inclusion. The regression analysis showed that factors such as age, sex, highest educational attainment, position/designation, teaching experience, and the number of relevant trainings or seminars attended had p-values ranging from .179 to .801, all exceeding the standard significance threshold of $p < .05$. This indicated that these demographic variables did not meaningfully influence teachers' perceptions of inclusive leadership.

Beta coefficients further reflected weak relationships between each variable and the outcome. For instance, age had a negative Beta value of -0.441, but its non-significant p-value of 0.179 rendered the relationship statistically insignificant. Similar patterns were observed for sex (-0.158), teaching experience (0.106), and trainings attended (0.265), confirming that individual teacher characteristics had minimal impact on how culturally responsive leadership was perceived.

These findings suggested that perceptions of leadership were shaped more by systemic and structural elements—such as school climate, leadership practices, and institutional support—than by personal demographics. The results supported the idea that culturally responsive leadership must be rooted in organizational strategies rather than individual traits.

Furthermore, the absence of significant correlations with personal background variables emphasized the importance of engaging families, students, and communities to foster inclusivity. This aligned with Epstein's (2019) advocacy for stakeholder involvement and with Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis's (2016) call for leaders to collaborate with marginalized communities to address inequities.

Table 33 Multiple Regression Analysis on test of relationship on the profile of the teachers and their perceived level of culturally responsive leadership in advancing inclusion

Variables	Beta	p-value	Decision
Age	-.441	.179	Not Significant
Sex	-.158	.247	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	.051	.801	Not Significant
Position/Designation	-.132	.441	Not Significant
Teaching Experience	.106	.738	Not Significant
Number of Relevant Trainings/Seminars Attended	.265	.227	Not Significant

In conclusion, the findings underscored that effective culturally responsive leadership depended less on who the teachers were and more on how leadership engaged the broader educational community. Thus, educational leaders were encouraged to prioritize inclusive and collaborative practices that actively supported diversity and equity across all levels of the school system.

Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of school heads revealed key insights into leadership capacity for culturally responsive practices. A majority were aged 46 and above, indicating a wealth of experience and institutional knowledge. However, this also emphasized the need for adaptability and continuous professional development to address the evolving diversity in schools. Despite high levels of educational attainment, many school heads lacked adequate preparation in diversity and equity, highlighting a gap in leadership training programs.

The gender distribution showed that 71.4% of school heads were female, reflecting broader trends in educational leadership. While this suggested potential for nurturing and inclusive school environments, it also underscored the importance of expanding leadership focus beyond gender to include race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to ensure comprehensive inclusivity.

In terms of civil status, the majority of school heads (85.7%) were married, which may have influenced their capacity for professional engagement due to competing personal responsibilities. Nonetheless, their academic achievements indicated a strong commitment to growth, which could support inclusive leadership if paired with relevant, ongoing training.

The teacher profile revealed a predominantly female workforce (91.9%) in early to mid-career stages, suggesting openness to innovative, inclusive practices. However, many teachers lacked advanced degrees and had limited participation in diversity-focused training. Most had attended only one to three relevant training sessions, indicating a need for enhanced and targeted professional development. Mentorship programs were also recommended to support newer teachers in applying culturally responsive teaching strategies effectively.

Overall, while both school heads and teachers showed potential for advancing culturally responsive education, gaps remained in training, preparation, and practical support that needed to be addressed to fully realize inclusive leadership and pedagogy.

Level of culturally responsive leadership along diversity and equity

The findings from both school heads and teachers revealed a nuanced view of culturally responsive leadership in schools. School heads generally rated themselves higher across all domains compared to teachers, especially in areas such as professional development and inclusive leadership. For example, school heads reported a high mean score of 3.77 for professional development, while teachers provided a more moderate score of 3.29. This gap highlighted a disconnect between leadership actions and teachers' day-to-day experiences, suggesting that culturally responsive leadership must be both visible and felt at all levels.

Both groups identified cultural competence as the lowest-rated domain, with school heads rating it moderately (3.31) and teachers rating it even lower (2.91). This consensus indicated a critical area for growth, reinforcing the argument that without a strong foundation in cultural understanding, equity and inclusion efforts may lack substance.

Moderate ratings were also observed in equity-driven decision-making and representation, with teachers expressing cautious optimism about existing policies and practices. However, the higher self-ratings from school heads in these areas suggested that intentions and formal initiatives were not consistently perceived by teachers in practical terms. This pointed to the need for stronger communication, collaboration, and shared leadership.

Overall, while efforts toward culturally responsive leadership were evident, they remained in the early stages. Both school heads and teachers recognized the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion, but emphasized the need for deeper integration of these principles into leadership identity and everyday school practices. The findings underscored the importance of embedding cultural competence into leadership development programs, promoting reflective practice, shared values, and authentic engagement across the school community.

Level of culturally responsive leadership in advancing inclusion

The findings from both school heads and teachers revealed a shared perception that culturally responsive leadership in advancing inclusion was moderate overall. School heads expressed greater confidence in inclusive policy implementation, while teachers showed slightly more optimism in collaboration with stakeholders. This discrepancy pointed to a gap between leadership intentions and how those efforts were experienced at the classroom level. While policies were present, their practical implementation remained inconsistent—a challenge noted by Theoharis (2018), who emphasized the importance of accountability in translating policy into practice.

Support for marginalized groups emerged as the weakest area in both datasets, with school heads rating it the lowest ($M = 3.19$) and teachers reporting a similar concern ($M = 3.15$). Although training on diversity appeared relatively strong, other forms of support—such as financial aid, accommodations, and counseling—were only moderately rated. These findings underscored the need for targeted investments in inclusive services and infrastructure to better address systemic barriers, as advocated by Galloway and Ishimaru (2017).

Collaboration with stakeholders was viewed as a moderately strong domain, particularly in areas like parent engagement and community partnerships. However, high variability across schools suggested inconsistency in these efforts. While some leaders were effective in building inclusive partnerships, others struggled to engage external stakeholders meaningfully. This echoed the views of Skrla et al. (2018) and Khalifa et al. (2016), who argued that stakeholder collaboration must be reciprocal, sustained, and grounded in shared leadership.

Overall, the moderate ratings across domains indicated that foundational steps toward inclusion had been taken, but systemic transformation had yet to occur. The gap between policy and actual support mechanisms suggested a risk of symbolic rather than substantive leadership. To move forward, schools needed to strengthen accountability, expand direct support for marginalized learners, and promote genuine community involvement. True equity-driven leadership required intentional, reflective, and sustained efforts, where practice aligned with policy, and all stakeholders were empowered to contribute meaningfully.

Tests of Relationships of the Testable Variables

The study revealed a consistent pattern: demographic and professional profile variables—such as age, sex, educational attainment, years of experience, position, and number of trainings—did not significantly predict perceptions of culturally responsive leadership (CRL) across diversity, equity, and inclusion dimensions. This indicated that traditional leadership qualifications were not reliable indicators of inclusive leadership effectiveness. Although some regression models showed initially high correlation and explained variance (e.g., $R = .759$, $R^2 = .576$), the drop in adjusted R^2 and non-significant ANOVA results suggested model weakness and potential overfitting. These results aligned with literature emphasizing that transformative, equity-oriented leadership relies more on values and actions than on demographic traits or credentials.

Variables such as seminar attendance approached significance ($p = .060$) yet still failed to show strong predictive power. This highlighted the importance of quality over quantity in professional development. Additionally, neither administrative experience nor leadership designation significantly affected CRL perceptions, further questioning traditional promotion pathways based on tenure or hierarchy.

The findings also emphasized the importance of institutional culture and systemic supports over individual traits. Leaders who effectively implemented inclusive policies, engaged marginalized communities, and honored student voice had stronger perceived impact, regardless

of their background. Thus, the study advocated for equity-centered leadership development that prioritized moral purpose, cultural competence, and systemic reform.

From the teachers' perspective, strong and significant correlations (e.g., $r = .728$ to $.761$, $p < .001$) reinforced and expanded on the school heads' data. Teachers closely associated inclusive leadership with professional development, representation, and systemic support for marginalized groups. These insights confirmed that CRL must be comprehensive, practiced at every school level, and institutionalized through shared governance, reflective leadership, and equitable decision-making.

In conclusion, the study demonstrated that effective culturally responsive leadership was defined not by who leaders were demographically, but by how consistently and meaningfully they enacted equity-driven practices.

IV. Conclusion

The study revealed a perceptual gap between school heads and teachers regarding culturally responsive leadership (CRL), particularly in areas such as professional development and inclusive leadership. School heads viewed their practices more favorably, whereas teachers expressed more reserved assessments, suggesting a disconnect between leadership intentions and teachers' daily experiences. Both groups consistently rated cultural competence as the weakest domain, highlighting the need for ongoing engagement with identity, bias, and systemic inequities.

Moderate scores in equity-driven decision-making and stakeholder representation suggested that while inclusivity efforts existed, their impact was uneven. Collaboration with stakeholders showed promise, but inconsistencies across schools pointed to the need for more sustained and authentic partnerships. Despite the presence of inclusive policies, limited direct support for marginalized students remained a significant weakness, indicating that practical application often fell short of rhetorical commitment.

Importantly, statistical analysis showed that demographic and professional variables—such as age, sex, experience, position, or formal qualifications—did not significantly predict perceptions of CRL. This challenged traditional views on leadership readiness and emphasized that transformational leadership is rooted more in ethical commitment, cultural awareness, and reflective practice than in demographic traits.

Overall, the findings underscored that effective culturally responsive leadership requires system-wide alignment between policy, practice, and culture. Schools must prioritize equity-focused behaviors, continuous professional learning, and structural support to advance inclusion. Ultimately, inclusive leadership was found to depend not on who leaders are demographically, but on what they do consistently to foster equity and belonging.

V. Recommendations

Based on conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- Implement regular feedback mechanisms (e.g., anonymous surveys, focus groups) to align leadership perceptions with teacher experiences.
- Ensure transparent communication of culturally responsive leadership goals, processes, and outcomes.
- Engage both school heads and teachers in ongoing training on cultural awareness, anti-bias education, and systemic inequality.
- Co-design professional learning with teachers, focusing on practical strategies that support inclusive instruction.
- Promote participatory leadership by involving staff in equity-related planning and decision-making.
- Invest in targeted student support services such as culturally responsive counseling, accommodations, and socio-emotional programs.
- Conduct equity audits to assess the application and impact of inclusive policies in daily school operations.
- Build collaborative partnerships with families, community members, and organizations to support inclusive practices.
- Allocate funding and resources to support inclusion efforts, including accessible facilities, diversity centers, and multilingual materials.
- Integrate equity and inclusion into school improvement plans with measurable goals and accountability structures.
- Prioritize equity-centered qualities over demographics or tenure in leadership selection and promotion.
- Develop training programs that focus on essential equity skills like cultural humility, restorative practices, and inclusive communication.
- Promote continuous self-assessment and ethical reflection among leaders to confront biases and uphold social justice and inclusion.
- Define and implement school-wide standards for culturally responsive leadership, integrating them into evaluations and growth plans.

- Foster inclusive school environments through peer mentoring, shared leadership, and community-based decision-making structures.

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