

STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN ARABIC EDUCATION IN A PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

*Yasser M. Abo

**Adrian V. Protacio

***Norhaya S. Abo

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Corresponding Author: Yasser M. Abo; **Email:** yasserabo@sksu.edu.ph; doi: 10.46360/globus.edu.220251005

Abstract

The study ascertained the students' lived experiences in Arabic education in a public secondary school. It identified the lived experiences and context, problems, challenges, issues, joys, and views of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school. The study's approach utilized descriptive phenomenology, which is concerned with revealing the "essential structure" of any phenomenon under investigation rather than something else. The researcher employed purposeful sampling based on experience to provide rich insights from the respondents. The said informants were selected based on the identified number of students simultaneously taking Arabic classes at a local madrasah to determine their lived experiences. Researchers-structured interview questions were administered to gather data from the five respondents. Through thematic analysis, the students' lived experiences in Arabic education in a public secondary school were centered on five relevant themes: Islam is a Way of Life; the school's support for students learning Arabic; Challenges in the School Environment; Intercultural Communication Development; and Advantages in future success.

Keywords: Arabic Education, Madrasah, Public Secondary Schools, Muslim Students, Purposeful sampling.

Introduction

Islam was brought by Arab and Malay merchants who followed Southeast Asian trade routes, spreading Islam with a variety of traditions. Muslims were termed "Moros" by the Spanish in allusion to the Muslim "Moors" found in Spain and North Africa, whom the Spanish despised. As a manifestation of bravery, the Filipino Moros successfully resisted the Spanish conquest and were able to maintain their identity, religion, and tradition, and one of these is the continual Arabic education in the country.

Arabic education largely relates to Arabic language instruction, which is important for both religious and cultural purposes. Arabic is the language of the Quran, Islam's holy book, and is especially essential to Muslims since it is utilized in Islamic rites, prayers, and religious studies. Muslim Filipinos in the country, the Madaris Education, which is the oldest educational institution in Mindanao, is recognized to be the single most important factor in the preservation of the Islamic faith and culture in the Philippines (Lamla, 2018).

The Philippines has a substantial Muslim population centered primarily in the country's south, particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and other portions of Mindanao. The 1987 Constitution's Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which is no longer in existence, was replaced by BARMM. The subsequent 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) provided guarantees to overhaul the ARMM legislation to make it more responsive to the needs of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (Martinez et al., 2021).

For Muslim students learning Arabic in the Philippines, as a Christian country, attending secular education is essential. It acts as a bridge for intercultural communication. It also gives a chance for the students to experience international contexts, enabling them to use technology, collaborate on research projects, and participate in online learning communities.

*MAT, Teacher III, President Quirino National High School, President Quirino, Sultan Kudarat, Philippines.

**PhD, Assistant Professor IV, Sultan Kudarat State University, Tacurong City, Philippines.

***Teacher I, President Quirino National High School, President Quirino, Sultan Kudarat, Philippines.

Similarly, Mahrooqi and Denman (2016) stated that improving the quality of education can contribute to long-term individual, social, and economic gains that can have a profound impact on personal fulfillment, national competitiveness, growth, and development.

Muslim students in the Philippines who are fluent in both Arabic and secular have a well-rounded skill set that not only improves their knowledge of Arabic education but also positions them to be part active in a globalized and bilingual environment. Since the Philippines is a Christian country, Muslim Filipinos must have well-rounded skills to improve their knowledge of Arabic education, which positions them to be part actively in a globalized and bilingual environment. Further, Gomez et al. (2019) supported that for Muslims, including Muslim Filipinos, real education is composed of both religious and secular education. A person should have a solid understanding of the Qur'an in addition to their otherworldly abilities and knowledge.

Many studies on bilingual education and its effects on language competency are already available, but there is a glaring knowledge deficit when it comes to the socio-cultural difficulties faced by students who are simultaneously studying Arabic and the secular. There is more attention given to linguistic outcomes, while the social and cultural aspects of this multilingual experience have received little attention. Additionally, some educators and officials suggested that one solution to various religious and cultural challenges in education is to incorporate Islamic cognition and values into "secular" education. (Marasigan).

Another issue that Muslims face as autonomous people is keeping up with global education, which is secular education brought by Western countries. Anent to this, the section of DepEd Order No. 41 known implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program was adopted in 2017. However, since its inception, there has been a dearth of professional literature on a coherent sociological understanding of Muslim education in the Philippines (Sali, 2023). As Philippine Education continues to implement the ALIVE Program, it is very clear that it is only for grades one to three, and there is a gap in implementation from grade four up to junior high school. Similarly, students are forced to enroll in some nearby madrasas for weekends just to maintain and continue what they have started. In the battle against the new Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19),

Countries have switched from traditional close schooling to remote education as a defensive measure in the fight against the deadly virus. Although many countries have been previously

exposed to natural and human-made disasters, distance education has not been used as a solution to those crises in the same way it has been applied in the wake of the coronavirus crisis (Abdulrahman et al.). Similarly, there is considerable evidence that madrasah education has become stronger, as many students are using a modular learning approach.

As the pandemic subsides, many students have had to make adaptations owing to changes brought on by the new normal, one of which is attending school every day. As a result, students have a tough time adjusting to these changes.

Statement of the Problem

This study outlined the actual experiences of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school. It gave light to the following queries:

1. What are the lived experiences of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school?
2. What are the contexts of lived experiences of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school?
3. What are the problems, challenges, and issues faced by students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school in the future?
4. What benefits and joys do students experience when studying Arabic and English simultaneously?
5. What are the views of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school in the future?

Methodology

Research Design

The study's approach was the descriptive phenomenological method. Phenomenological study seeks to explain and characterize persons' lived experiences, sometimes via interviews, to understand their subjective perceptions and viewpoints. According to Morrow et al. (2015), descriptive phenomenology is concerned with revealing the "essence" or "essential structure" of any phenomenon under investigation-that is, those features that make it what it is rather than something else.

Similarly, Sadruddin (2018) stated that phenomenology as a philosophy and a method of inquiry is not limited to an approach to knowing; it is rather an intellectual engagement in interpretations and meaning-making that is used to understand the lived world of human beings at a conscious level. This research aims to identify students' lived experiences in Arabic education in a public secondary school.

Research Locale and Participants

This study was carried out at President Quirino National High School at Poblacion, Sultan Kudarat, Region XII. The school humbly began with 5 teachers only taking care of 305 students in 1991. The first principal of the school was Mr. Ernesto E. Diaz. Since then, the student population at the school has increased. In response, resolution No. 85-05 was sponsored by SB Member Lucio Castillo, and a municipal high school in the Sultan Kudarat town of President Quirino was established. The researcher chose this location because it is the school where the researcher teaches, and there are a large number of students studying Arabic at the same time. The informants and respondents of the study are junior high school students enrolled at President Quirino National High School who are simultaneously taking Arabic classes at a local madrasah.

The said informants/respondents were selected based on the identified purposefully taking Arabic classes at a local madrasah. Each informant has been chosen to determine their lived experiences. This research delimits the qualitative data collection techniques, which include interviews (face-to-face) and JHS students purposefully selected.

Research Instrument

To assist the researcher in the study, he employed a structured interview questionnaire. The interview had five parts. Part I concentrated on the lived experiences of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school. Part II focused on the contexts of lived experiences of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school. Part III identified the problems, challenges, and issues faced by students who are currently enrolled in public secondary schools while learning Arabic. Part IV concentrated on the benefits and joys students experience when studying Arabic and English simultaneously. Part V determined the views of Students learning Arabic Education in a Public Secondary School in the future.

Data collection was recorded through face-to-face interviews, and researchers utilized audio recordings for documentation. Researchers and participants observed and followed health procedures during the face-to-face interactions. The questions are based on their own experiences in learning Arabic education in a public secondary school.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher provided President Quirino National High School's principal with a letter of permission. Following that, the researcher requested assistance from the advisers to identify the participants. Following approval, the respondents went through a series of interviews and observations. To guarantee

the safety of respondents and the researcher, appropriate health regulations were strictly followed. To ensure that no data is modified, transcripts are verbatim.

Data Analysis Methods

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within the data. It organizes and describes all data in detail. There are six (6) steps covered in thematic analysis:

1. Familiarizing the data. In this step, the researcher will read and re-read the data to become familiar with what the data needs and pay attention to the patterns that occur. The researcher must complete data collection.
2. Generating initial codes and themes (initial themes). The researcher generates the initial codes by documenting where and how patterns occur. This happens through data reduction, where the researcher collapses data into labels to create categories for more efficient analysis. Data complication is also completed here. This involves the researcher making inferences about what the codes mean.
3. Searching for themes (clustered themes). The researcher combines codes into overreaching themes that accurately depict the data. It is important to develop themes that describe exactly what the theme means, even if it does not fit. The researcher also describes what is missing from the analysis.
4. Reviewing themes. In this step, the researcher examines how the themes support the data and the overreaching theoretical perspective. If the analysis seems incomplete, the researcher must go back and find what needs to be added.
5. Defining and naming themes (relevant themes). The researcher needs to define each theme, which aspects of data are being captured, and what is interesting about the themes.
6. Producing the report; in the last step, when the researcher writes the report, the researcher decides which themes make meaningful contributions to understanding what is going on within the data.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presented the research findings of the data collected from the study, Students' Lived Experiences in Arabic Education in a Public Secondary School. The findings are presented concerning the research objectives stated in the study. The methodology chapter already discusses the method used to analyze the data.

The results of this qualitative study are based on interviews with junior high school students enrolled at President Quirino National High School. There were five participants in this study, one man and four women.

Presentation of the Findings

The researchers checked the interview transcript, and the analysis revealed patterns across interviews, developing themes based on repetitive responses provided by the five participants interviewed.

The emerging themes were (a) Islam is a way of life, (b) support for students learning Arabic, (c) challenges in the school environment, (d) intercultural communication development, and (e) advantage in future success. The themes were based on repetitive or similar responses from each of the interviewees.

Theme 1: Islam is a Way of Life

The first relevant theme addresses the lived experiences of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school. This theme was illustrated by the two (2) clustered themes such as Personally Obligatory Knowledge (Fard al- 'Ayn) and Family and Religious Leaders' influences.

Muslim students were asked about the process of becoming a part of Arabic education, and most of them responded that Muslims are obliged to study their religion in Islam or personally obligatory knowledge (Fard al-'Ayn). Participants have stated,

"And the process is that when I heard the Imams or the ustadz' khutba na yung Muslim na obligadong na mag-aral ng kanyang sariling relihiyon at saka Qur'an."

(And the process is that when I heard the Imams or Ustadz' Khutba that Muslim is obliged to study his religion and Qur'an.) ST-2

"...kasi ang pag-aral ng Arabic ay pinupukaw nito ang ating sarili at dahil obligado tayo na pag-aralan ang sarili nating reliyon."

(...because the study of Arabic awakens ourselves and because we are obliged to study our own religion.) ST-3

"Ang pananaliksik ng kaalamang Islam ay obligado sa lahat ng Muslim."

(To search for knowledge in Islam is obliged to all Muslims.) ST-1

The influence of family and religious leaders was the motivating factor why Muslim students started studying Arabic. Most of them mentioned that they were inspired by the religious leaders and were being encouraged by their religious parents.

Participant 2 shared that.

"When I heard the khutba, I got inspired because of it. And I immediately enrolled to the nearest Madrasa to study in there." ST-2

Participant 4 also said that,

"What inspired me the most are the motivational speakers in every Friday; na kung saan kapag nag-prepare po kami, may mga speaker na nag-promote on how to be a good Muslim or Muslimah."

(What inspired me the most are the motivational speakers every Friday, where we prepare every time some speakers promote how to be a good Muslim or Muslimah.) ST-4

Participant 3 added,

"Ang naging inspiration ko sa pag-aaral ng Arabic ay ang pamilya ko. Dahil sa kagustuhan kong madala din sila sa tamang landas at kung hindi dahil sa supportan nila ay hindi ako makakausad."

(My inspiration for learning Arabic was my family. I want to get them on the right path and without their support I wouldn't be able to progress.) ST-3

Furthermore, the participants also shared that studying Arabic has an impact on their lives, leading to the concept that "Islam is a way of life." The majority of the student participants described Islam as an all-encompassing and thorough part of their lives. They have highlighted,

"Malaki po ang ambag ng pag-aaral ng Arabic para makamitan ang pangarap kasi ang Arabic ay nagtuturo sa isang tao na maging mabuti kasi ang Arabic is the way of life."

(The study of Arabic has contributed greatly to achieving the dream because Arabic teaches a person to be good because Arabic is the way of life.) ST-2

"It made my Iman more powerful, po. And I was scared that I would die. Na wala pong enough na Tawba o paghingi po ng tawad. Pag mayroon po kayong kasalanan."

(It made my Imaan more powerful. And I was scared that I would die if there was not enough Tawba or asking forgiveness if you sin.) ST-5

"So, the advances of learning Arabic are that, through learning Arabic, you can build your character on it. something like character development on yourself. Kasi kung nag-aaral ka ng Arabic, dito tinuturo

sa'yo kung ano yung tama, kung ano yung mali, and tinuturo sa'yo kung paano mo tratuhin yung ibang tao."

(So, the advances of learning Arabic are that, through learning Arabic, you can build your character on it— something like character development on yourself. Because if you are studying Arabic, it teaches you what is right and wrong and teaches you how to treat other people.) ST-4

Theme 2: School's Support for Students Learning Arabic

Relevant Theme 2 centers on the context of lived experiences of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school. This theme was outlined by the three (3) clustered themes, such as the Conduct of events associated with Arabic education, Recognition of religious practice, and Alternative performance tasks suitable for Muslim students

Muslim students and participants recognized the support of their secondary school in their religious beliefs and practices. When asked about what event in their school is associated with their Arabic education, most of them mentioned Islamic symposiums. The conduct of yearly Islamic symposiums in their public secondary school has had a positive impact on Muslim students, as indicated by their responses:

"Dito po sa President Quirino National High School, here in our school, nagkakaroon po tayo ng symposium every year. And the symposium, may connection po siya sa pag-aaral ng Arabic. Ma-increase po yung knowledge. And so, for other students po, kasi may ibang students na hindi nag-aaral ng Arabic, then they can have the opportunity para makinig po and para mabalaan sila kung ano yung pwede or kung ano po yung hindi dapat gawin."

(Here in President Quirino National High School, here in our school, there is a symposium every year. And the symposium has a connection to Arabic education. Our knowledge will increase. And so, for other students, because some of the students do not study Arabic; then they can have the opportunity to listen and be aware of the dos and don'ts.) ST-5

"I am very happy that the school promoted it [the symposium] because nagkaroon po kami ng isang araw na mag-unite with our fellow brothers and sisters Bangsamoro students."

(I am very happy that the school promoted it [symposium] because we had one day to unite with

our fellow brothers and sisters, Bangsamoro students.) ST-4

"Noong Ramadhan din last year, kaya po nagkaroon ng Islamic symposium para marefresh ang sarili natin at pananaw kung ano ng dapat at di dapat gawin."

(In the previous Ramadhan last year, the reason why is there an Islamic symposium is to refresh ourselves and our perspective on what is right and wrong.) ST-2

Moreover, their public secondary school showed their recognition of the religious practices of Islam by awarding Muslim women students who wear their hijabs and providing a prayer room. Participant 3 expressed that,

"Awarding po para pag-i-hijab po... As a maguindanaon po, parang mas na-inspire ko yung sarili ko na huwag magtanggag ng hijab, magsuot lagi ng hijab para sarili yun at para din po makamit yung mga achievements."

(Awarding for wearing hijab. As a maguindanaon, I feel like I am more inspired, reminding myself not to take off my hijab, to always wear hijab for myself and for attaining achievements.) ST-3

Participant 5 highlighted that,

"Unang-unang na-observe ko po is the teachers or the mentors are giving guidance to the learners on how to act, the way to dress, and the hijabs. At kapag puwasa po, naga-initiate po ang mga teacher ng mag-perform ng wudho sa araw ng Ramadhan. And nag-provide sila ng prayer room. Syempre, kasi pag nag -aaral ka ng Arabic, kung may kaalaman ka na, dapat mag-pray ka ng five times a day. And that opportunity helps us to do what is necessarily and obliged to do."

(The first thing I have observed is that the teachers or the mentors are giving guidance to the learners on how to act, the way to dress, and the hijabs. And every fasting time, the teachers initiate to perform *ablution* on the day of Ramadhan. And they provided a prayer room. Of course, if you are studying Arabic, and you have the knowledge that you should pray five times a day. And that opportunity helps us to do what is necessary and obliged to do.) ST-5

Another support from the school for Arabic education is that teachers provide alternative performance tasks suitable for Muslim students. Participants substantiated that,

“Naging okay naman po sa kanya [teacher], na hindi kami sumayaw at binigyan na lang po kami ng ibang activity... Actually po, yan. Yung teacher na po yun, maganda po yung pakikitungo niya po sa akin. Ramdam po po yung respect niya sa akin.

(It was okay for him [teacher] that we did not dance and gave us other activities instead. That teacher is good and treated me well. I felt his respect for me.) ST-1

“May ginawang alternative solution para matugunan ang mga grades namin through pagcomply ng projects like maggawa na lang po ng kunwari po mga slogan.”

(There is an alternative solution to meet our grades through completing projects like making slogans.) ST-3

Theme 3: Challenges in the School Environment

This theme focuses on problems, challenges, and issues faced by students who are currently enrolled in public secondary schools while learning Arabic. Theme 1 was characterized by three (3) clustered themes: insensitivity to religion and culture; curriculum challenges; and time management.

Muslim students struggled with the school environment in secular education, like a lack of religion and cultural sensitivity, as they experienced bullying, discrimination, and stereotyping because of their clothing and identity as Muslim.

As Participant 2 said,

“In my experience, bullying and discrimination were how Muslims were treated as terrorists. Kumbaga, kung makakita sila ng isang muslim ay natatakot sila. Sa pananamit at yung kumbaga sinasabi nila na stereotype ng mga Muslim is terrorist. Kung makakita sila ng muslim o mga babaeng naka niqabi is terorista na daw yan.”

(In my experience, bullying and discrimination of how Muslims are treated as terrorists. If they see a Muslim, they are afraid. In clothing, they say that Muslim stereotypes are terrorists. If they see Muslims or niqabi women, they are terrorists.) ST-2

Participant 1 added,

“Sa Arab Islamic Education po kasi, okay lang, wala naman masyadong pagsubok sa mga tao. Pero sa secular, naranasan ko yung pambubully Yun lang po sinasabihan ng terorista, ninja.”

(In Arab Islamic Education, it's okay, there's not too much test for people. But in secular, I experienced bullying. They call me a terrorist, ninja.) ST-1

Participant 4 affirmed that,

“Discrimination talaga, sir. Kasi yung mga accent namin, sir, and yung the way we talk, parang yung mga outfit or yung mga accessories na meron kami, sir. Kasi, sir, may iba sa amin, sir, na naka-fully covered yung mga naka-nikab, which is, parang, gina-discriminate nila, sir, as a ninja. And, and, at yung pananamit nila, sir.”

(Discrimination sir. Because of our accent, sir, and the way we talk, our outfit and accessories we have sir. Because some of us sir are fully- covered, or niqabi women, which is why we are discriminated as ninjas because of their dress code, sir.) ST-4

Another challenge faced by the Muslim students was the curriculum expectation of the secular education. The curriculum of secular education includes performance tasks like singing, dancing, and dramas that are not suitable and inappropriate or considered “Haram” in the Islamic teachings of Arabic education. The participants asserted that,

“Ang masasabi ko po is Hindi [suitable]. Kasi yung secondary education namin, sir, is lahat-lahat na po ng religion pinag-aaralan naming lahat, and ang mga activities that are not suitable for our religion are ginagawa namin and... Lalong-lalo ng science sir, siyempre, yung science, sir, nag-study siya ng phenomenon, which is, nagca-cause ng kung mababa yung Iman mo, sir. Pag-iintindi mo sa religion mo, sir. Nagca-cause ng indecisive sa pag-iisip. Kung ano ba yung talagang totoo” ST-4

(I can say that it is not [suitable]. In secondary education, sir, all of the religions are being studied and the activities which are not suitable for our religion are somewhat what we do. Especially in science, sir; of course, in science sir, it studies phenomena which can cause indecisiveness in thinking about what is true if your Iman is low. Iman is the understanding of your religion, sir.)

“Dati po, may muntik na po magpasayaw sa amin. So, sinabi ko po, in-explain po po, inipaliwanag po ang hukom ng pagsasayaw sa Islam is hindi po pwede. Gaya po ng pagkakanta kanta ng mga simbahan. Una po kasi, ang pagkakanta is hindi po pwede. lalo na pag may instrument.” ST-1

(Before, someone almost made us dance. So, I said, I explained, I explained that the judge of dancing in Islam is not allowed. Just like the singing of the church's song. Because singing is not allowed, especially if it has an instrument.)

*"Pagdating din po sa activities, nagkakaroon din po kami ng conflict between, sa aming mga maguindanao na nag-aral ng Madrasah, between Christians. Kasi po, kunwari sa dance, sila po, pwede po sila magsali. Tapos kami na mga students sa Madrasah po, nagka-conflict po kami dun dahil po sa obligatory na bawal po talaga lalo na babae kami. So, parang gusto nila as a member or leader sila, gusto nila makumpleto yung grades nila."*ST-3

(When it comes to activities, there is also conflict between us, the maguindanao who are studying in Madrasah, and the Christians. Because, for example, in dance, for them [Christians], they are allowed to join. Then, we, the students of Madrasah, are conflicted because it is obligatory that its [dancing] is not allowed, especially since we are women. So, it is like they want as a member or leader all of us to participate so that they could complete their grades.)

Additionally, Muslim students toiled in managing their time in coping with their lessons in secular and Arabic education. These students are studying for the whole week, Monday to Friday for their secular education, whereas Saturday and Sunday are for their Arabic education. A participant said,

*"Nahihirapan po kasi sabay sabay po kasi sa Madrasah po namin is may mga subject din so kailangan... na kailangan po na studyhan."*ST-3

(It's difficult because, at the same time, our Madrasah also has subjects that need to be studied.)

Participant 4 added that,

"Yung time namin po is nade-deminish or nako-compromise dahil sa napakaraming school works at saka activities. Na-apektuhan nito yung pag-aaral namin kasi nagmu-multi-task po kami. And, especially graduating students, kami, and we are focused more on the secondary education."

(Our time is diminishing or it is being compromised because of many school works and activities. Our studying is being affected because we are multi-tasking. And especially we are graduating students and we are focused more on secondary education.) ST-4

The participants struggled with their religious practices because of the schedule of classes in secular education, As participants 3 and 5 quoted,

"Ano po, dua time kasi every 12th and 3rd po, naga-perform po kami dapat ng prayer. And unang-una po, wala pong time. Yun nga po, hindi po namin na po perform yung obligation namin. Kasi yung time is hectic."

(So, our dua time is every 12th and 3rd, we should be performing our prayer. First, we don't have the time, that is why we cannot perform our obligation because the time is hectic.) ST-3

"Yung first thing po is the time. The time po. Kasi po, I know that I'm good, both Arabic and secular. And hindi ko po alam kung ano yung uunahin ko. There's a time that hindi ko na po nabibigyan ng time para mag-rest ang sarili ko. Hindi ko na po alam kung ano yung uunahin ko."

(The first thing is the time. The time because I know that I'm good at both Arabic and Secular. And I don't know what to put first. There's a time when I cannot give my time to let myself get rest. I don't know what to put first.) ST-5

The above statements are indicative of the challenge experienced by the participants in their secular education in public secondary school.

Theme 4: Intercultural Communication Development

The theme revolves around the benefits and joys students experience when studying Arabic and secular education simultaneously. This theme was illustrated in two (2) clustered themes, to wit: Boosting Communication Confidence in Different Languages; and Peace and Unity in Diverse Culture.

Despite the challenges encountered by Muslim students in public secondary schools, they were able to acknowledge the advantage of studying Arabic and secular education, even with cultural and linguistic diversity. Muslim students shared that,

"Kasi sir Pag nag-aaral ka ng Arabic, nagkakaroon ka ng good deeds at the same time is, nabi-build nga yung karakter mo, yung confidence mo, the way you communicate to others, etc."

(Because sir, if you are studying Arabic, you are doing good deeds at the same time, your character is developing and your confidence as well, the way you communicate to others, etc.) ST-4

"Kasi sir sa dalawang lengwahe na yun sir nabubuo yung skills mo kasi kaya mo ng makipagcommunicate sa ibat ibang tao."

(Sir, in dual language, sir, your skills are being developed because you can communicate with different people.) ST-2

"Malaki ang epekto ng dual language proficiency pagdating sa pagpapalakas ng self-esteem ng isang tao. Makakatulong ito sa kanila na magkaroon ng kumpiyansa na magkikipag-usap sa isa't isa dahil alam nila ang higit sa isang wika."

(There is a great effect of dual language proficiency when it comes to boosting the self-esteem of a person. This will help them have confidence to communicate with each other because they know more than one language.)

More than the development of self-confidence in communicating with others, Muslim students talked about the greater joy of studying both Arabic and secular education because it entails peace and unity, even in cultural diversity.

As participants 3 and 1 said that,

"Ang pagkakaroon ng dalawang wika sa isang komunidad ay may magandang dulot. Napapadali niya ang pagkakaintindihan ng tao at nakakatulong sa pagkakaisa sa kabila ng sarili niya."

(Having dual languages in a community has a positive result. It lets people understand each other easily and helps in unity aside from himself.) ST-3

"Secular and Islamic education are both important to the life of the Islamic people. Considering the Islamic and secular education, napapatibay nito ang pagkakaisa ng mga mag-aaral, understanding the culture of each different religion. Ng sa gayon, may aware ang bawat isa sa mga dapat at hindi dapat ginawa sa isang Islam, whatever religion it is."

(Secular and Islamic education is both important to the life of the Islamic people. Considering Islamic and secular education, strengthens the unity among students, understanding the culture of each different religion, so that everyone is aware of what is right and wrong in Islam, or whatever religion it is.) ST-1

Participants 4 and 5 supported that.

"Dahil po, kung nag-aaral ka po ng dalawang [lengwahe], multi-linguistic person ka is nagiging instrument ka po sa iba

na kung saan kung hindi po nila alam yung languages... At the same time, natuturuan mo din silang mga ng mga paniniwala and mga practices na ginagawa sa Arabic. At the same is nakaka-advantage ito sa tao dahil kung marami kang alam na language is marunong ka makipagsalamuha sa iba't ibang tao. And Yun minsan yung nag-cause ng unity."

(Because if you study two languages, if you are a multilingual person, you are becoming an instrument to others who are not knowledgeable of languages... at the same time, you can teach them the beliefs and practices done in Arabic. At the same time, it is an advantage to a person because if you know different languages, you can interact with other people. And this, sometimes, causes unity.) ST-4

"And dahil po doon, mas lalo pong nahikayat yung pananaw po. Mas lalo pa po siyang lumawak. And because of it, naisip ko po na dapat po magkaroon ng peaceful relationship po. And dapat lahat po tayo, hindi po natin iniisip na dapat ako lang. Dapat lahat po ng tao sa mundo. So, we should live peacefully with them. Dahil po sa pag-aaral ko ng Arabic and English, na mas lalo pong lumawak ang aking kaisipan. And mas lalo ko pong narealize na hindi lang dapat isa o dalawang lingwahe ang dapat nating alamin. Dapat po, marami pong tayong lingwaheng aalamin."

(That further inspired me to broaden my perspective. It even grew and widened. And because of it, I thought that there should be a peaceful relationship. And that all of us should not only think for one's sake. It should be for all people in this world. So, we should live peacefully with them. As I study Arabic and English, my mindset widens, and I have realized that we should know more than one or two languages.) ST-5

Theme 5: Advantage in Future Success

The final theme was all about the views of students learning Arabic education in a public secondary school in the future. This theme was described in two (2) clustered themes: establishing skills for professional success and spiritual success.

Muslim students and participants considered that learning Arabic education in a public secondary school is an advantage to their future success. They have acknowledged that studying Arabic and secular education will open chances beneficial for them in the future. Participant 1 said,

“Magkakaroon ko ako ng opportunity na magturo sa Madrasah at magturo din sa secondary education.

(I will have the opportunity to teach in *Madrasah* and in secondary education too.) ST-1

“Kaya po nang gi-mention ko po kanina, if ever maging doktor ako, then magagamit ko po yung mga napag-aralan ko. Gustong-gusto ko po mag-apply sa Arabian country. And if ever po na mapunta po ako doon, ipagpapatuloy ko po yung pag-aaral ko para mas mag-increase pa rin po yung knowledge ko sa Arabic. And because of that, maaaring ko pong gamitin yun para makipag communicate sa mga Arabs doon or mga Arabian people. And maaaring magkaroon pa po ako ng better future dahil po doon.”

(Just like what I mentioned earlier, if ever I am going to be a doctor, then I can use what I have studied. I want to apply to an Arabian country. And if ever I succeed, I will continue studying so that I will increase my knowledge of Arabic and be able to use it to communicate with Arabs and Arabian people. And I will have a better future there.) ST-5

As Muslim students studying in both secular and Arabic education, they establish skills that can be useful for the success of their future careers. These skills, as they have revealed, were memory, comprehension, and communication.

“On the importance of language diversity in education. Comprehension skill. Being a student of both Arabic and secular education, you have to be a critical thinker for you to easily understand nature.” ST-3

“Then yung skill po na yun na mag-increase po is yung pagsulat po. Then, maaari ko na po siyang magamit if ever na naging doktor na po ako and makapagtrabaho na po ako sa iba't ibang country and I am confident na po kasi natutunan ko na po yung dalawang lengwaheng yun and I can use it.”

(Then the skill I have increased is writing. Then, I can use this if ever I am going to be a doctor and I can work in different countries, and I am, I have confidence because of what I have learned in two languages.) ST-5

“Sa Arabic is tinuturuan kami dito; firstly, is the memory; second is nabibihasa kami sa communication. Kasi every day is nagkakaroon kami ng muhadara and nagbo-bolster yun ng experience and confidence namin.”

(In Arabic, we are taught that first is the memory, and second is that our communication is being honed. Because every Friday we have *Muhadara/preach* and it bolsters our experience and confidence.) ST-4

Moreover, most of the participants have declared that Arabic education is valuable for their success in their spiritual lives.

“Malaking tulong o ambag po ang pag-aaral ng Arabic para sa pangarap mo o sa magiging propesyon mo sa hinaharap, kasi yung Arabic nagtuturo po na gawin mo ang lahat ng makakaya sa lahat ng bagay. At ang Islam po ay nagtuturo din not to cheat. Ito ay nagtuturo sa isang tao na maging mabuti kasi ang Arabic is the way of life.”

(Studying Arabic is helpful for your dreams and professional aspirations in the future because Arabic teaches that you can do your best in whatever tasks you undertake. And Islam teaches us not to cheat. It teaches a person to be good because Islam is the way of life.) ST-2

“Nagtuturo po siya [Islam] na paano po disiplinahin ang aking sarili, kung paano po aabutin niyo ating pangarap”.

(It teaches how to discipline myself and how to achieve my dreams.) ST-1

Discussions of Qualitative Findings **Relevant Themes on Students' Lived Experiences in Arabic Education in A Public Secondary School**

Muslim students' experiences in Arabic education in a public secondary school were characterized by five relevant themes. These include (a) Islam as a way of life, (b) support for students learning Arabic, (c) challenges in the school environment, (d) intercultural communication development, and (e) advantages in future success.

Relevant Theme 1: Islam is a Way of Life

This is all about the students' experiences of learning Arabic education in a public secondary school. Muslim students often study Arabic due to family and religious influences, as they are obliged to study their religion in Islam. Studying Arabic significantly impacted their lives, leading them to view Islam as a comprehensive and comprehensive part of their lives.

Arabic education gives Muslim students a sense of personal identity and affiliation. It enhances their feeling of community and fosters a good self-identity by assisting children in comprehending their beliefs, values, and cultural history (HuffPost, 2021).

By promoting a balanced and moderate understanding of Islam, students are equipped with knowledge that rejects radical interpretations and fosters a peaceful and inclusive worldview (Arab News, 2022). Lastly, prioritizing Islamic teachings promotes religious literacy among Muslims, enabling them to deepen their understanding of their faith, engage in meaningful religious practices, and articulate their beliefs and values to others (The Jakarta Post, 2022).

Relevant Theme 2: School's Support for Students Learning Arabic

Support from the school, especially in secular education, is considered essential for Muslim students. According to Ahmed (2016), support means something designed to "help" Muslim students and provide them with opportunities.

Explicit supports are specifically geared toward Muslim students, such as providing a prayer room. The provision of a tangible room for Muslim students to perform their daily prayers is considered resource support (York, Giangreco, Vandercook, & Macdonald, 2000).

Students who see their backgrounds or cultures considered in the curriculum feel engaged and included in their learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009), which also increases academic achievement (Taylor & Cummins, 2011)

Relevant Theme 3: Challenges in the School Environment

Muslim students struggled to assimilate into their school environment, particularly in a school that promotes diversity and equality. Studies indicate that the bias they face results from a lack of understanding and cultural differences. This bias originates from a mix of limited knowledge and differences in cultural backgrounds (Chen et al., 2019).

Unmet accommodation needs are crucial for creating a supportive and nurturing atmosphere that allows all students to thrive and reach their full potential. Muslim students often experience being strangers on campus because some students and faculty do not know their religious practices (Naparan & Balimbingan, 2020).

Challenges faced by Muslim students, such as women, are often singled out for discrimination because of modest dress including wearing the hijab (Zaal, 2012) and differential levels of religious discrimination/exclusion in schools (Amatullah, 2023).

Also, there is the challenge of the curriculum expectations of secular education, especially in the

subject of singing and dancing as graded activities. Islam teaches that females are not permitted to dance in front of non-family males. Muslim students believed that they were not permitted by their religion to play sports and perform physical education curriculum expectations in front of their male counterparts (Ahmed, 2016).

Relevant Theme 4: Intercultural Communication Development

The simultaneous study of both Arabic and secular education impacted the perspective of Muslim students in terms of intercultural communication, which eventually led to peace and unity in diverse cultures. Since globalization, intercultural learning from the students' perspective has become more important (King, Perez, & Shim, 2013).

Students' storytelling enabled them to learn from each other, gaining insights from personal experiences and diverse social backgrounds, which helped them understand different worldviews (Hart, 2016).

Crossman and Bordia (2011) found that intercultural learning provided opportunities for several cultures to work together, change perceptions, and gain experience in culturally diverse environments. The message of peace in Islam is not exclusively aimed at a particular group of people; rather, it is a message of peace for everyone (Ahmed, 2016).

According to Khaliq (2021), the combination of both forms of education promotes cultural awareness and tolerance by exposing students to different cultures, religions, and beliefs, fostering mutual understanding and respect. This helps to build a diverse, inclusive society that celebrates differences.

Relevant Theme 5: Advantage in Future Success

Muslim students believed that studying Arabic in a public secondary school would help them succeed in the future.

Relatively, Balah (2023) found out that the integration of secular and Arabic education offers a holistic education, combining academic knowledge with religious teachings, fostering a balanced worldview, and enhancing critical thinking skills, enabling students to analyze information and make informed decisions.

Students who study Arabic education in addition to secular education have more employment options. In addition to gaining a strong foundation in academic disciplines like math, physics, and languages that open doors to a variety of careers, they can also take advantage of opportunities in Islamic research, religious education, and

community leadership by learning about Islamic principles (The Straits Times, 2022).

The ultimate benefit of studying Arabic education for Muslim students is that they receive a strong foundation in their faith, aiding in their spiritual growth and connection with Islam (Alam, 2022). Islamic teachings provide moral guidance based on ethical principles derived from the Quran and Hadith, equipping students to navigate moral dilemmas and make ethical choices in their personal and professional lives (The New York Times, 2021).

Conclusion

With the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. For Muslim students, studying Arabic education is beyond meeting personal obligations and family influences because Islam is their way of life.
2. The school's support for Arabic education encouraged Muslim students to study and practice their religion while pursuing secular education.
3. Muslim students battled conflicts in their secular education because of their beliefs and identity; however, they have demonstrated resilience.
4. Studying both Arabic and secular education enhanced the students' intercultural communication skills and promoted peace and unity by encouraging understanding and respect for diverse cultures.
5. Muslim students viewed learning Arabic in a public secondary school as advantageous for their spiritual growth and professional success.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) certify that they have no conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

I/we certify that the article *Students' Lived Experiences in Arabic Education in a Public Secondary School* is the authors' original work. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. On behalf of all co-authors, the corresponding author shall bear full responsibility for the submission. This research has not been submitted for publication, nor has it been published in whole or in part elsewhere. We attest to the fact that all authors listed on the title page have contributed significantly to the work, have read the manuscript, attest to the validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation, and agree to its submission.

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