The Impact of Traditional Madrasah and Mbhte Elementary Education on The Sama Dilaut in Simunul, Tawi–Tawi

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ABSTRACT

This study explored trends and patterns in learner experiences using a quantitative descriptive design to investigate the effects of Madrasah education on the Sama Dilaut community in Simunul, Tawi-Tawi. The respondents included Sama Dilaut students aged 10 to 14 who were enrolled in two MBHTE elementary schools and traditional madrasahs for the academic year 2024–2025. Socioeconomic difficulties, individual beliefs, behavior, community involvement, and cultural preservation were among the variables examined in the survey. Purposive sampling was employed due to the hard-to-reach nature of the population. Descriptive statistics and independent t-tests were applied to compare cultural and educational outcomes. The findings showed that although education had a positive impact on religious identity, behavior patterns, and community involvement, issues with socioeconomic inclusion and cultural preservation persisted. While both groups experienced marginalization, discrimination, and a lack of resources, learners who were enrolled in traditional Madrasahs demonstrated a "somewhat higher" level of engagement with cultural preservation. The results highlight the need for more culturally sensitive educational policies that support and advance the academic and cultural growth of underrepresented groups, such as the Sama Dilaut.

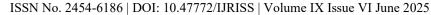Keyword: Madrasah Education, Sama Dilaut, Cultural Integration, Islamic Values

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education can be a very effective means of integrating into a pluralistic society, but Muslims' educational marginalization has two negative effects: it restricts their community's access to international opportunities and slows down national advancement (Mujawar & Hivalingappa, 2022). Madrasahs, which are frequently found in isolated locations with few or no other educational options, act as hubs for free education and moral teaching, with a foundation in social service and humanism. For many Muslims, particularly those from marginalized communities, madrasahs play a crucial role in shaping their cultural identity and providing access to education. Despite constitutional support for indigenous and non-formal education (Article 14, Sections 2 and 17), the growth of Islamic education in the Philippines is constrained by a funding gap resulting from the separation of church and state (Article 6, Section 29[2]) (Abu Bakar, 2011).

The Sulu archipelago, particularly Simunul, is home to the first mosque in the Philippines, built by Sheikh Karim'ul Makhdum in the fourteenth century. The Sama Dilaut are a nomadic, seafaring tribe renowned for their rich maritime culture. Both formal and informal Islamic teachings, including oral tradition and community customs, are fundamental to their educational practices (Navarro, 2015). In the community, madrasah education helps preserve cultural identity by fostering religious, moral, and practical knowledge. However, research on the obstacles and opportunities the Sama Dilaut face in accessing high-quality Islamic education remains limited. This study seeks to address that gap by examining educational access, pedagogical efficacy, and the role of Islamic education in the cultural and social development of the Sama Dilaut in Simunul. By offering guidance to legislators, educators, and community leaders, the study aims to promote culturally sensitive teaching approaches that harmonize Islamic values with indigenous traditions.

Objectives of the Study

This research study aims to evaluate the role of Traditional Madrasah and MBHTE elementary education in

shaping the religious, cultural, and socio-economic well-being of the *Sama Dilaut* community, while identifying enduring challenges and opportunities for improvement. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Analyze the impact of Traditional Madrasah and MBHTE elementary education on the religious and ethical development of Sama Dilaut learners.

2. Investigate how these educational systems support cultural identity retention and social cohesion among the Sama Dilaut, particularly in the face of modernization.

3. Compare the educational outcomes related to personal identity, community engagement, and cultural preservation between Sama Dilaut learners enrolled in Traditional Madrasah and those primarily in MBHTE elementary schools.

4. Identify the persistent socio-economic challenges faced by Sama Dilaut learners across both educational systems.

Research Questions

This research study aimed to investigate the impacts of Traditional Madrasah and MBHTE education on *Sama Dilaut* learners' religious identity, ethical development, and community engagement. It also acknowledged persistent challenges in cultural preservation, equitable access, and socio–economic inclusion. This study addressed the following questions:
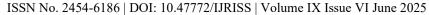
1. What are the demographic characteristics of the *Sama Dilaut* learners, specifically their gender?

2. To what extent does participation in the Traditional Madrasah MBHTE education influence the following dimensions: 2.1. Personal Beliefs and Identity 2.2. Behavior and Decision–Making 2.3. Community Transformative Engagement 2.4. Cultural Preservation 2.5. Socio-economic Challenges in their educational life

3. Is there a significant difference in cultural identity strength, level of community engagement, and severity of socio-economic challenges between Sama Dilaut learners enrolled in Traditional Madrasah education and those who are not, after controlling for other socio-economic variables?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within Muslim communities, madrasah education, rooted in Islamic teachings, serves as an important educational framework. For the Sama Dilaut people of Tawi-Tawi, this model is not only central to shaping religious and cultural identity but also plays a significant role in fostering socio-economic development. In the Philippine context, madrasah education bears the responsibility of preserving students' religious and cultural identities while addressing the challenges posed by globalization. As Qornain (2023) points out, madrasahs can promote intercultural dialogue and help develop tolerant, critically engaged, and globally aware individuals. However, they must also adapt to the demands of contemporary education, technological advancement, and social transformation.

Atkins (2014) emphasizes the continued marginalized Muslim and Indigenous Peoples (IP) continue to be, with lower participation and completion rates and limited access to high-quality education. DepEd Order No. 40 (s.2011) and DepEd Order No. 41 (s.2017) are two policies that have been put into place to address these disparities. They recognize the unique needs of Muslim students while attempting to incorporate Islamic education into the national framework.

According to Article IX, Section 16 of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, education is a top priority for the Bangsamoro Government, which supports the development of an integrated system that remains aligned with the national framework. The Bureau of Madaris Education envisions nurturing a generation grounded in Islamic values and capable for leadership (Bacani et al., 2001). However, Samid (2022) notes that challenges persist in implementing Islamic education, particularly in traditional madrasahs, where there are integration issues and resource limitations. In order to improve student learning and expand educational opportunities, Qornain (2023)

emphasizes the importance of collaboration between madrasahs and formal institutions.

As an indigenous seafaring group, the Sama Dilaut have long faced marginalization and limited access to formal education (Usman & Baconguis, 2016; Johanson, 2024). According to Santos (2019), traditional educational systems often overlook the unique cultural background of the Sama Dilaut, resulting to a misalignment between the needs of the community and the curriculum content. Madrasah education, on the other hand, presents a more responsive instructional approach that aligns more with their religious and cultural values. According to Sihabon, who is cited by Banagudos (2018), Madrasahs are establishments that promote morality and unity among various tribal communities.

For Sama Dilaut children, madrasah education has yielded favorable results in terms of educational attainment. Salain (2023) claims that students in madrasahs have better literacy as well as a greater sense of accountability and output. Their education places a strong emphasis on employable skills and practical knowledge that are suited to the needs of the community (Bacani et al., 2023). Salain (2023) also cites Muhammat (2015), who contends that madrasah education fosters Muslim children's self-esteem and potential as they navigate multicultural settings, thereby encouraging social engagement and empowerment.

Another significant factor in preserving the Sama Dilaut's cultural identity is madrasah education. According to Canillo et al. (2020) and Talikan et al. (2024), education that is grounded in custom, cultural values, and community support cultivates resilience and a deep respect for heritage. These elements foster an atmosphere that supports education and identity preservation in the face of outside influences. Madrasahs play a vital role in preserving traditions while equipping students with contemporary skills by integrating Islamic teachings with general education.
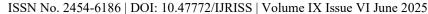
Madrasah education plays a significant role in promoting socioeconomic advancement. According to Noor et al. (2024), madrasahs function not only as centers of religious instruction but also as venues for general education and communal empowerment. Graduates often gain employment and contribute to local economic growth. By enhancing adult literacy and expanding job opportunities for Sama Dilaut youth, integrated education helps community members better engage with broader social and economic systems.

Despite these advantages, Tawi-Tawi madrasah education still faces difficulties. Its efficacy is hampered by a limited curriculum, insufficient funding, and inadequately trained teachers, as Sali & Marasigan (2020) note. Additionally, participation is discouraged by the stigma associated with indigenous education in society (Usman & Baconguis, 2016). In order to strengthen madrasah institutions and advance educational access for the Sama Dilaut, comprehensive policies and community outreach are required to address these problems.

Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, in their Cultural Reproduction Theory (1990), argue that educational institutions reinforce social inequality by using pedagogical action and symbolic violence to transmit the cultural values of the dominant class. This theory is vital for analyzing how the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) and the Madrasah system may reinforce or challenge the socio-economic and cultural positioning of the Sama Dilaut, a traditionally sea-dwelling indigenous community. Jumala (2011) provides an ethnographic account of the community's shift from nomadic to sedentary existence, highlighting how external factors like formal education impacted their cultural identity. Similarly, Melchor et al. (2024) in their study suggest that the educational systems available to the Sama Dilaut either validate or incorporate their capital culture, it may suggest promoting empowerment, or marginalize them.

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986) suggests that at school, students acquire new behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making strategies by observing and imitating those around them, within educational environments like Madrasah and MBHTE. This process is called reciprocal determinism. Contemporary resources like Teachers Institute (2024), Learning Mole (2024), and Education Corner emphasize how verbal instruction, peer learning, media, and live modeling shape student behavior, particularly in diverse, community-based educational contexts like those experienced by Sama Dilaut learners.

Critical Race Theory (CRT), developed by scholars such as Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, provides a vital framework for examining how structural inequality and systematic racism shape the educational experiences of marginalized communities. In the Philippine context, Muega and Acido-Muega (2023) apply CRT to expose the

persistent marginalization and exclusion of indigenous groups like the Sama Dilaut, driven by caused by cultural erasure, uneven policy implementation, and resource disparities.

Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, particularly the stage of "identity vs. role confusion," stresses that adolescence is a critical period in the formation of self-coherent. This identity formation achieved through values exploration, beliefs, and social roles (Erikson, 1968). Building on this, Marcia (1966) proposed four identity statuses based on the dimensions of exploration and commitment: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement. These theories explain how students balance potentially competing cultural and religious influences in an educational context.

METHODS

With an emphasis on identifying trends and patterns in learner experiences, this study employed a descriptive-quantitative approach to investigate the effects of Madrasah education on the Sama Dilaut community in Simunul, Tawi-Tawi (Creswell, 2014). Respondents included 50 Sama Dilaut students aged 10 to 14, 25 enrolled in two MBHTE elementary schools, and 25 enrolled in two traditional madrasahs during the 2024–2025 school year. The study was conducted across five barangays with sizable Sama Dilaut populations. Data were collected using a systematic, pilot-tested survey with high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88), which featured Likert-scale items addressing socioeconomic challenges, behavior, beliefs, community involvement, and cultural preservation. Due to the population's limited accessibility, a purposive sampling technique was employed. Following the acquisition of school permits, classroom observations were conducted, and questionnaires were distributed with confidentiality guaranteed. Data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics for demographic and contextual patterns, and t-tests to compare cultural and educational outcomes between learners in Madrasah and MBHTE schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
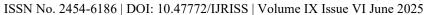
Demographic Profile of the *Sama Dilaut*

Table 1.1 Frequency Distributions of the Demographic Profile by gender

Gender	Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Male	20	40.0
Female	30	60.0

Table 1.1 reveals that among the 50 *Sama Dilaut* learners surveyed, 30 (60%) are female and 20 (40%) are male. This indicates that females comprise the majority of participants in the study, while males represent a substantial minority. According to feedback from parents, some sons accompany them on fishing trips, which may explain the lower male enrollment. From an early age, many male Sama Dilaut are encouraged to engage in child labor to help support their family's livelihood. As noted in Hansen's study, cited by Casanillo et al. (2020), learning is equated to a change in behavior in a positive direction and is influenced by demographic and cultural backgrounds, and the learning environment. *Sama Dilaut* often struggles to keep up with the lessons due to some factors, like socio-economic problems and a lack of resources. According to Usman and Baconguis (2016), *Sama Dilaut* has a short developmental horizon. While they aspire for modest improvements in their children's lives, the pressing need for daily survival dictates their decisions. *Sama Dilaut* men, specifically the younger ones, work low-paying jobs, such as *kargador* or laborer at the local pier and market, while daughters work as housemaids in nearby villages.

Table 2.1 Mean Distribution of the Personal Belief and Identity

Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
1. My madrasah education has strengthened my religious beliefs and identity.	4.58	.58	Very High Impact

Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
2. I have become more reflective about my beliefs and values after studying madrasah education.	4.68	.47	Very High Impact
3. My perception of right and wrong has been influenced by my madrasah education.	4.12	.85	High Impact
4. My Madrasah education fosters respect for cultural traditions.	4.44	.61	High Impact
5. I have gained a deeper understanding of Islamic principles and their role in my daily life.	4.48	.54	High Impact
6. My education has helped me integrate my religious beliefs with my cultural identity.	4.30	.68	High Impact
7. My education has influenced my personal goals and aspirations in life.	4.42	.64	High Impact
8. My Islamic education has made me more conscious of the importance of moral and ethical decision-making.	4.32	.47	High Impact
9. I have developed a greater appreciation for diversity in religious perspective.	4.48	.58	High Impact
10. I am more aware of my personal biases and assumptions because of my education.	4.34	.69	High Impact
Overall average means	4.42	.20	High Impact

The findings revealed, as shown in Table 2.1, that Madrasah education significantly strengthens pupils' religious beliefs and identities of Sama Dilaut learners, with an overall average mean of 4.42. This empirically supports the existing literature, which claims that madrasahs serve as a pivotal institution for religious and cultural life. This is further reflected in very high mean scores for strengthening religious belief (M = 4.58) and fostering reflection of values (M = 4.68). This aligned with prior research (Mujawar & Hivalingappa, 2022), which emphasizes the role of Madrasah education as "citadels of social service" and the "nucleus of cultural and educational life of Muslims," stressing their role in imparting humanism and Islamic tenets.

Additionally, the data support Sihabon's theory (quoted by Banagudos, 2018) that madrasahs foster morality and unity as shown by their significant influence on moral and ethical decision-making (M = 4.32) and the perception of right and wrong (M = 4.12). Madrasah education shows a significant role in conserving the Sama Dilaut's heritage, as evidenced by the high impact on promoting respect for cultural traditions (M = 4.44) and integrating religious beliefs with cultural identity (M = 4.30). The findings of this study are supported by Suparman and Nasri (2024), who state that Madrasah curricula often incorporate local traditions and values. While Efendi and Aprison (2023) noted that this integration helps maintain the unique identity of the Sama Dilaut at the same time, promoting moral and ethical values rooted in both Islam and local customs.

The findings also suggest that madrasah education contributes to students' self-esteem and personal goals, as noted by Ontok-Balah (2023). Even the development of an appreciation for diversity (M = 4.48) is supported by Butt and Khalid (2017) and claims that madrasahs promote cross-cultural dialogue and develop an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding. Overall, Table 2.1 provides substantial evidence that Madrasah education thoroughly shapes the religious, moral, and cultural identity of Sama Dilaut learners.

Table 2.2 Mean Distribution of the Behavior and Decision-Making

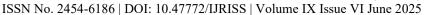| Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
1. My madrasah education has changed how I make ethical decisions in daily life.	4.54	.65	Very High Impact
2. I apply Islamic principles in my decision-making process.	4.24	.66	High Impact

3. I have become more disciplined in practicing Islamic rituals.	4.24	.52	High Impact
4. My education has encouraged me to resolve conflicts using Islamic teachings.	4.40	.64	High Impact
5. I now approach challenges in life with more patience and wisdom.	4.26	.60	High Impact
6. I feel more responsible for my actions after studying madrasah and MBHTE education.	4.66	.56	Very High Impact
7. My education has helped me to develop self-control in difficult situations.	4.26	.60	High Impact
8. I have learned to balance my religious beliefs with the practical aspects of life.	4.36	.63	High Impact
9. I consider fairness and justice more in my interactions with others.	4.40	.54	High Impact
10. My education has made me more confident in making independent decisions.	4.50	.58	High Impact
Overall average means	4.39	.22	High Impact

Table 2.2 highlights the transformative effect of madrasah education on students' behavior and decision-making, with a high overall mean (M = 4.39) indicating a "High impact." *Sama Dilaut* learners reported a very high change in how they make ethical decisions (M = 4.54), reflecting the successful integration of Islamic ethics into educational curricula, emphasizing character development and moral cultivation across various subject areas (Ibrahim et al., 2024). The importance of applying Islamic principles in daily decision-making (M = 4.24) and resolving conflicts using Islamic teachings (M = 4.40) corroborates past findings that highlight how Madrasah education provides practical knowledge and promotes social cohesion through its emphasis on human values and solidarity (Mujawar & Hivalingappa, 2022). Faja (2024) also confirms that this approach can guide students' practical actions and choices. The consistency in these high-impact scores underscores the role of madrasah education as a catalyst for self-discipline and personal growth.

Table 2.3 Mean Distribution of the Community Transformative Engagement

Statement	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
1. My madrasah and MBHTE education have increased my involvement in religious and community.	4.58	.50	Very High Impact
2. I am more willing to help others because of my education.	4.50	.74	High Impact
3. I participate in community service projects inspired by Islamic values.	4.28	.57	High Impact
4. My education has influenced my perspective on social justice and fairness.	4.40	.64	High Impact
5. I feel more motivated to educate others about Islamic teaching.	4.30	.65	High Impact
6. My education has encouraged me to promote peace and harmony in society.	4.38	.57	High Impact
7. I actively apply Islamic principles in my professional or academic life.	4.26	.60	High Impact
8. I feel more responsible for contributing positively to my community.	4.34	.66	High Impact
9. I have learned to respect and appreciate different perspectives within my community.	4.59	.61	Very High Impact
10. I believe my education has prepared me to be a positive agent of change in my society.	4.42	.81	High Impact
Overall average means	4.40	.30	High Impact

In terms of community involvement, as revealed in Table 2.3, the data indicate a strong connection between education and civic engagement, with an overall average mean (M = 4.40) indicating a High Impact. *Sama Dilaut* learners expressed a very high willingness to contribute to their communities (*M* = 4.50), participate in community service projects inspired by Islamic values (M = 4.28), and promote peace and harmony (M = 4.38). This underscores the role of both Traditional Madrasah and MBHTE education in developing individuals who uphold Islamic principles while actively contributing to contemporary society and civilizational progress (Sasmita, Fudhuli, & Zainuri, 2024). Madrasah education instills a sense of duty and motivation by promoting individuals to uphold values of justice, equality, and responsible management in their dealings with others and the environment (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Importantly, social cohesiveness within the Sama Dilaut community is directly influenced by this high level of community involvement. The two educational systems, especially Madrasah education with its focus on *ukhuwah* (Islamic brotherhood), strengthen the connection between community members by promoting a sense of duty, fostering values like justice and equality, and encouraging active participation in community service. The strong willingness of learners to extend help to other people and their appreciation for different perspectives (M = 4.59) indicate that their educational experiences promote a sense of collective responsibility, which is vital to sustaining and evolving the Sama Dilaut's communal identity. While educational content presents challenges for cultural preservation, community engagement serves as a crucial mechanism for reinforcing the Sama Dilaut's shared values and collective identity, thus contributing to social cohesion in practice. Despite being a community-focused institution, madrasah education in particular contributes to the sustenance of this shared identity through collective religious and social practices.

Table 2.4 Mean Distribution of the Cultural Preservation

Statement	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
1. I feel a disconnection between my cultural identity and the education I receive in the madrasah and MBHTE education.	3.48	1.33	High Impact
2. I find it difficult to form positive relationships with peers due to cultural differences and discrimination.	2.98	1.32	Moderate Impact
3. My Madrasah Education and MBHTE Education had not actively used the Sama Dilaut dialect and cultural expressions in learning activities.	3.34	1.14	Moderate Impact
4. I feel that there is no collaboration between learners, educators, and the Sama Dilaut community in cultural preservation efforts.	3.12	1.22	Moderate Impact
5. My education has increased my awareness of the socio-economic challenges faced by the Sama Dilaut community.	3.62	1.09	High Impact
6. I feel that my community does not provide enough support for Sama Dilaut learners facing educational challenges.	3.36	1.26	Moderate Impact
7. I worry that the negative experiences I face in education will have long-term impacts on my life and career prospects.	3.56	1.07	High Impact
8. There is a lack of representation of Sama Dilaut culture in the educational materials used in my madrasah and my school.	4.10	.84	High Impact
9. Negative educational experience can lead to internalized oppression, which may lead to an awareness of the injustices we faced.	3.66	1.33	High Impact
10. I often experience cultural dislocation in educational settings, both in Madrasah Education and MBHTE education, that prioritize mainstream values over indigenous practices.	4.12	.48	High Impact
Overall average means	3.53	.68	High Impact

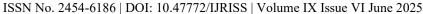In contrast, Table 2.4 reflects significant challenges in cultural preservation within both Madrasah and MBHTE

educational settings, as evidenced by the overall mean score (M = 3.53), interpreted as "High Impact" challenges. The mean score of 3.48 for the feeling of disconnection between cultural identity and educational content reveals a potential gap in educational practices that inadequately incorporate local Sama Dilaut cultural contexts (Atkins et al., 2014). This is reflected by the high impact scores for "lack of representation of Sama Dilaut culture in the educational materials" (M = 4.10) and experiences of "cultural dislocation (M = 4.12), suggesting that mainstream values often take precedence over indigenous practices. These findings align with Barnouw, as cited by Panelo et al. (2016), who noted the influence of educational institutions in transmitting cultural values, which, in this context, appears to lean towards an assimilation rather than a preservation model for the Sama Dilaut culture.

It is crucial to note the intended contributions of these educational systems to the preservation of cultural identity despite the many challenges. Although there are gaps, the literature review stresses that the very objective of Madrasah education is to be "more in line with their religious and cultural values" (Santos, 2019) and "preserves cultural identity by fostering religious, moral, and practical knowledge" (Navarro, 2015). The focus on Islamic teachings in Traditional Madrasahs, which have an intricate connection with Sama Dilaut customs and societal norms, implicitly promotes a kind of cultural continuity through religious identity for students. The presence of Islamic Values Education (DepEd Order No. 40 s.2011; DepEd Order No. 41 s.2017) even in MBHTE elementary education represents an attempt, albeit possibly an insufficient one, to incorporate culturally relevant content. To fully realize the potential for cultural retention, educators must address a key pedagogical gap, which is the limited use of the Sama Dilaut dialect and cultural expressions in learning activities (M = 3.34).

Table 2.5 Mean Distribution of the Socio–economic Challenges

Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
1. I have experienced bullying in my educational environment because of my Sama Dilaut cultural background.	3.20	1.09	Moderate Impact
2. The challenges I face in education due to bullying and discrimination have affected my mental health.	3.34	1.02	Moderate Impact
3. My experiences of discrimination have made me feel less proud of my Sama Dilaut heritage.	3.00	1.13	Moderate Impact
4. My negative experiences in Madrasah education and MBHTE education have diminished my aspirations for the future.	3.30	1.45	Moderate Impact
5. My status in life has limited my ability to fully participate in educational activities and programs	3.48	1.28	Moderate Impact
6. The education I receive does not adequately prepare me for job opportunities due to societal biases against Sama Dilaut individuals.	3.24	1.15	Moderate Impact
7. I feel that discrimination against Sama Dilaut learners is prevalent in both madrasah education and MBHTE education settings.	3.48	1.05	Moderate Impact
8. I believed that Sama Dilaut learners have less access to educational resources compared to other students.	3.32	1.00	Moderate Impact
9. The educational environment often feels hostile or unwelcoming to Sama Dilaut learners.	2.92	1.24	Moderate Impact
10. I feel isolated and have decreased motivation to engage in learning because of bullying and discrimination by my peers.	3.34	1.10	Moderate Impact
Overall average means	3.26	.66	Moderate Impact

Table 2.5 shows the overview of socio–economic challenges faced by the *Sama Dilaut* learners with an overall mean score (M = 3.26) illustrating a "Moderate impact" aligned with the ongoing discourse about educational inequities. The moderate scores on experiences of bullying (M = 3.20) and the perceived limitations on

participation in educational activities (M = 3.48) and feelings of discrimination affecting mental health (M = 3.34) directly reflect the "multi-tiered discrimination" and being "relegated to society's periphery" that the Sama Dilaut experience. This also suggests that systemic issues that compromise *Sama Dilaut* learners' educational experiences and aspirations are likely to have more economically disadvantaged backgrounds and poorer academic performance (Boxer et al., 2011). The perception of less access to educational resources (M = 3.2) and the feeling that the educational environment often feels hostile or unwelcoming (M=2.92) further support the literature that describes the Sama Dilaut as one of the poorest and marginalize people experiencing a "deprivation trap" that restricts their opportunities due to illiteracy, ignorance, and lack of skills. These systemic issues, including educational and the dominance of Western frameworks, as what has been documented by Atkins et al. (2014). In addition, Muega and Acido-Muega (2023) examined through the lens of Critical Race Theory and found that resource disparity and structural inequality impact indigenous groups' educational experiences.

Ferrer & Abdul (2020) stated on their findings that Sama Dilaut learners manifested a positive outlook towards their studies, hence, were competitive and performed well in school. It is further concluded that they received equal opportunity to learn despite being labeled as *Sama Dilaut*. Furthermore, they established a strong appreciation and were devoid of discrimination towards their identity as a *Sama Dilaut*; thus, they changed the perception of the other individuals as illiterate and inferior. This contrast underscores the complexity of their educational realities, where marginalization exists alongside resilience and achievement.

Comparison of Educational Outcomes by Enrollment in Traditional Madrasah Versus MBHTE Education

In investigating the different effects of Traditional Madrasah and MBHTE elementary education, independent t-tests were conducted. This approach compares students attending Traditional Madrasah ("Yes" group) and those not enrolled, attending MBHTE elementary schools ("No" group).

It is imperative to investigate this comparison with nuance, thus acknowledging that MBHTE elementary schools in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) implement Islamic Education and serve predominantly Muslim students with Islamic teachers with the same religious and similar cultural backgrounds. As a result, the two educational systems are not entirely distinct in terms of the presence or lack of Islamic values or cultural connection. Rather, the comparison highlights the differences in emphasis, particularly in the depth of religious education, the framing of moral behavior, and the incorporation of cultural systems. MBHTE schools include Islamic education and function within the larger national curriculum framework, while traditional madrasah education usually prioritizes and deeply integrates these elements in its primary objectives. In asking about participation in both general community engagement and more specialized traditional Sama Dilaut cultural or Madrasah-specific activities, for example, our survey instruments measured both general civic participation and engagement in culturally specific activities, capturing distinct emphases that influence learner outcomes.

Table 3.1 Results of Pupils' Transformative Learning Experiences (Personal Belief and Identity) in Traditional Madrasah and MHBTE Education by Enrollment

Variable	Yes[a]		No[b]				95% CL		
	M	SD	M	SD	t(48)	p	LL	UL	Cohen's d
Personal Belief and Identity	43.96	1.88	44.36	2.16	-0.70	0.49	-1.55	0.75	0.20

Note. N=50; a. Enrolled in traditional Madrasah; b. Not enrolled

[a]n = 25; [b]n = 25. *p < .05. **p < .01.

The analysis, as shown in Table 3.1, revealed no statistically significant differences in personal beliefs and identity development between Traditional Madrasah pupils (M = 43.96) and MBHTE pupils (M = 44.36), *t*(48) = 0.70, *p* = 0.49. A small effect size (*d* = 0.20) further underscores the lack of practical difference. Both educational settings appear equally effective in shaping pupils' core personal beliefs and identity. The small

effect size reinforces the lack of practical difference. This finding aligns with contemporary research suggesting that diverse Islamic educational pathways can effectively foster religious and personal identity formation. According to Branje et.al. (2021), personal identity is closely linked to social identity, which reflects the self–concept shaped by group affiliations. Individuals strive to balance their affiliation with social groups and their unique self-perception within those groups. Hope et al. (2013, as cited by Cramer, Pellegrini-Lafont & Gonzalez, 2014) found that positive racial group identification can strengthen the connections between self-esteem and achievement. Wenzing et al. (2024) found that multicultural approaches in schools, such as the Identity Project, should not only respond to students' ethnic identities but should also more explicitly cater to their religious identities. Madrasas have a responsibility to maintain and respect the religious and cultural identity of students (Qornain, 2023). This suggests that, within the BARMM context, both educational streams, despite structural and curricular difference, can serve as meaningful spaces for identity formation among Muslim learners.

Table 3.2. Results of Pupils' Transformative Learning Experiences (Behavior and Decision-Making) in Traditional Madrasah and MHBTE Education by Enrollment

Variable	Yes[a]		No[b]				95% CL		
	M	SD	M	SD	t(48)	p	LL	UL	Cohen's d
Behavior and Decision-Making	44.40	2.18	43.32	2.15	1.76	0.08	-0.15	2.31	0.50

Note. N=50; a. Enrolled in traditional Madrasah; b. Not enrolled

[a]n = 25; [b]n = 25. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 3.2 revealed a marginally non-significant trend where Traditional Madrasah-enrolled pupils ($M = 44.40$) scored higher in Behavioral and Decision-Making than MHBTE pupils ($M = 43.32$), $t(48) = 1.76$, $p = 0.08$, Cohen's $d = 0.50$. The moderate effect size suggests that Traditional Madrasah education may cultivate stronger decision-making competencies among learners. Research by Murawski (2014) supports the idea that educational environments significantly shape students' decision–making capabilities, particularly if the curriculum emphasizes critical thinking and ethical considerations. This points to the potential of culturally grounded curricula to shape not only moral reasoning but practical behavioral outcomes

Table 3.3 Results of Pupils' Transformative Learning Experiences (Community Transformative Engagement) in Traditional Madrasah and MHBTE by Enrollment

	Yes[a]		No[b]				95% CL		
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t(48)	p	LL	UL	Cohen's d
Community Transformative Engagement	43.68	2.15	44.24	3.81	-0.64	0.53	-2.32	1.21	0.18

Note. N=50; a. Enrolled in traditional Madrasah; b. Not enrolled

[a]n = 25; [b]n = 25. *p < .05. **p < .01.

As shown in Table 3.3, there were no significant differences in community transformative engagement between Traditional Madrasah pupils (M = 43.68) and MBHTE pupils (M = 44.24), $t(48) = 0.64$, $p = 0.53$. The effect size (Cohen's d) was small. Other groups had similar levels of engagement in activities aimed at community transformation. The small effect size underscores the equivalence. This suggests that transformative engagement, by applying learning to effect positive community change, is not exclusive to the Traditional Madrasah context According to Murphy (2021), social perspective-taking can develop the individual's ability to engage with

diverse perspectives. The interaction with diversity can positively influence their perspectives, attitudes, and values of students and disrupt cycles of racism. Exposure to diverse experiences can foster positive outcomes for learners, communities, and future societal participation. Tan & Hasman (2024) emphasize that community engagement among Muslim learners is increasingly driven by 21st-century education, preparing them for their future, and toward a green, digital, and global culture that transcends formal educational boundaries. This reinforces the idea that both educational models, when integrated with inclusive and future-ready pedagogies, can cultivate learners equipped for transformative civic engagement.

Table 3.4 Results of Pupils' Transformative Learning Experiences (Cultural Preservation) in Traditional Madrasah and MHBTE Education by Enrollment

Variable	Yes[a]		No[b]				95% CL		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(48)	*p*	*LL*	*UL*	Cohen's *d*
Cultural Preservation Engagement	37.20	6.44	33.48	6.70	2.00	0.05	-0.02	7.46	0.57

Note. N=50; a. Enrolled in traditional Madrasah; b. Not enrolled

[a]n = 25; [b]n = 25. *p < .05. **p < .01.

The data analysis, as shown in Table 3.4, revealed a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.05$) was found, with traditional Madrasah pupils ($M = 37.20$) scoring higher than MBHTE pupils ($M = 33.48$), $t(48) = 2.00$. A medium effect size (Cohen's *d*) suggests the difference is not statistically significant, but also practically meaningful. Traditional Madrasah education demonstrated a strong association with pupils' engagement in cultural preservation activities. The medium effect size indicates this difference was practically meaningful. Madrasahs often serve as central repositories and transmitters of specific Islamic cultural practices, languages (*Arabic*), religious arts, and historical narratives. According to Barnouw, as noted by Panelo, et al. (2016), educational institutions play a crucial role in the transmission of cultural values, which could explain why learners' engagement in cultural preservation might be more pronounced within a certain educational framework. Additionally, the influential facts of education on culture are: preservation of culture, transmission of culture, promotion of culture, equipping man to adapt to changing cultural patterns, molding the personality, restoring unity of mankind through diffusion of culture, and removing cultural lag. As Mathews and Savarimuthu (2020) note, education not only preserves and transmits culture but also equips individuals to navigate evolving social patterns, fosters personal development, and helps reconcile cultural continuity and change. While culture sets the foundation, education gives it form, transmitting values that sustain identity and social cohesion.
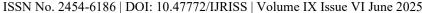
Table 3.5 Results of Pupils' Transformative Learning Experiences (Socio-economic Challenges) in Traditional Madrasah and MHBTE Education by Enrollment

Variable	Yes[a]		No[b]				95% CL		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(48)	*p*	*LL*	*UL*	Cohen's *d*
Cultural Preservation Engagement	33.88	6.31	31.36	6.79	1.36	0.18	-1.21	6.25	0.38

Note. N=50; a. Enrolled in traditional Madrasah; b. Not enrolled

[a]n = 25; [b]n = 25. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 3.5 indicated no significant difference was observed ($p = 0.18$) between Traditional Madrasah pupils (M = 33.88) and MHBTE pupils (M = 31.36), $t(48) = 1.36$. The effect size (Cohen's *d*) = 0.38 was small to medium. This suggests pupils' perceptions of socio-economic challenges are not primarily determined by enrollment in either traditional Madrasah or MBHTE schools. The effect size hints that traditional Madrasah pupils might

report facing slightly greater challenges, though this should be interpreted cautious interpretation given to non-significant result. According to Cuban (2020), two most influential variable affecting student achievement are parental support and socioeconomic status. This non-significant result aligns with the idea that systematic factors outweigh the influence of the educational model itself in shaping this dimension of experience.

It is important to note that the smaller sample size limits statistical power, particularly for detecting smaller effects like the trend in Behavior and Decision-making. The borderline significance $p = 0.05$ for Cultural Preservation warrants further investigation through replication. Future research should employ mixed methods to explore how these educational models differently influence TLE dimensions, consider longitudinal designs, and incorporate broader contextual variables (e.g., family religiosity, community resources).

CONCLUSIONS

Although the educational system had a significant role in helping Sama Dilaut students develop their religious identity and moral behavior, it fell short in preserving and integrating their distinct cultural identity. In order to establish a more inclusive learning environment, it is necessary to address the systemic gaps brought to light by the ongoing problems of prejudice and cultural marginalization. Traditional Madrasahs offer valuable models for enhancing cultural integration in mainstream education, as evidenced by the slightly higher levels of cultural involvement among their students.

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