ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

Awareness and Experiences of Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian Pupils Toward the Filipino Christian Living (FCL) Subject at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA – Calamba Campus

Dr. Flordeliza M. Dela Cuesta
Basic Education Department, University of Perpetual Help System DALTA – Calamba Campus, Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines
flordeliza.delacuesta23@gmail.com

Date Submitted:
October 01, 2026

Date Accepted:
October 28, 2026

Date Published:
November 28, 2026

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.24615820

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the awareness, attitudes, and lived experiences of Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils enrolled in Filipino Christian Living (FCL) at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA – Calamba Campus. Grounded in a constructivist-interpretivist worldview, Phenomenology, and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, the study explored how minority-faith learners interpret a Catholic-oriented values curriculum. Sixteen purposively selected pupils participated in audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews. Their narratives were examined through thematic analysis, with trustworthiness measures guided by Lincoln and Guba's criteria. Five themes emerged: sense of belonging and inclusion, understanding and association with FCL, emotional responses and engagement, teaching methods and classroom activities, and suggestions for improvement. Nine pupils reported feeling welcomed, attributing their experiences to peer friendships and supportive teachers. Fourteen understood FCL as a subject emphasizing universal moral virtues, including kindness, respect, honesty, and responsibility. Eight described positive emotions, while ten enjoyed creative activities such as poster-making, slogan design, and storytelling. Four experienced occasional exclusion, three reported recitation anxiety, and one expressed difficulty connecting with the subject. Twelve pupils were satisfied with instruction, while four offered suggestions for improvement, including additional Bible stories and brief lessons about other faiths. The findings suggest that explicit participation guidelines, differentiated classroom activities, and respectful interfaith awareness may support inclusion while preserving the Catholic identity. The study recommends strengthening psychological safety, communicating participation options to families, and incorporating minority-faith pupils' feedback into curriculum reviews and teacher development. Findings are context-specific and are not intended for statistical generalization beyond the participating school.

Keywords: *Filipino Christian Living, Non-Catholic pupils, Non-Christian pupils, inclusive religious education, phenomenology, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, interfaith awareness*

INTRODUCTION

Classrooms across the Philippines have grown noticeably more diverse in recent years, bringing together learners from varied cultural and religious backgrounds under one roof. For private sectarian schools, this demographic shift presents a distinct daily challenge: how to deliver authentic faith-based instruction while respecting the personal beliefs and family traditions of every learner. Religious education

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

remains central to character formation in Catholic institutions, where moral reasoning, spiritual awareness, and civic responsibility are woven directly into the academic curriculum.

At the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) – Calamba Campus, a private Catholic educational institution in Calamba City, Laguna, the Filipino Christian Living (FCL) subject serves as the core values formation course for basic education learners. Rooted in Catholic teachings and guided by the university's motto, "Character Building is Nation Building," FCL seeks to nurture virtues such as compassion, discipline, respect, honesty, and social responsibility. These values are intended to guide pupils not only inside the classroom, but also in their family life and broader community interactions.

Like many private institutions, however, UPHSD – Calamba Campus welcomes a student population that includes Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils alongside Catholic learners. In Grades 5 and 6, these pupils attend FCL classes grounded in a religious tradition that differs from—and occasionally contrasts with—their own beliefs and home practices. Upper-elementary pupils are at a formative stage in which peer belonging, personal identity, and independent moral reasoning become increasingly important. When engaging with Catholic prayers, doctrinal lessons, and religious activities, minority-faith pupils may experience a wide range of reactions, from genuine curiosity and pride to hesitation, recitation anxiety, or quiet discomfort.

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) encourages member schools to uphold their Catholic identity while practicing ecumenical and interreligious sensitivity. Achieving that balance requires listening directly to the pupils who experience the curriculum firsthand. Rather than assuming that shared classroom space automatically produces inclusion, this study gathers the voices of Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils at UPHSD – Calamba Campus to examine how they view, emotionally experience, and engage with the FCL subject.

Review of Related Literature

Educational Significance of Filipino Christian Living and Values Formation

Structured religious and values instruction plays a well-documented role in shaping young learners' ethical habits, self-discipline, and academic commitment. In his empirical study God, Grades, and Graduation, Horwitz (2022) found that religious upbringing and sustained moral instruction contribute meaningfully to students' academic persistence and sense of personal responsibility. Although situated in North America, Horwitz's work clarifies how faith-grounded frameworks anchor students' identity and behavioral expectations—dynamics that closely parallel the goals of FCL in Philippine Catholic schools.

Within the Philippine setting, Reyes et al. (2019) observed that religious education strengthens pupils' moral reasoning and ethical conduct, putting into practice the principle that character formation supports nation-building. When instruction goes beyond memorizing doctrine to emphasize lived virtues such as empathy, fairness, and service, pupils develop stronger civic awareness alongside spiritual growth. Similarly, Lee et al. (2018) demonstrated through longitudinal research that prolonged exposure to values-oriented religious lessons improves elementary and adolescent learners' ability to make principled choices in everyday social situations.

Psychological Well-Being and Long-Term Ethical Development

Beyond cognitive moral reasoning, supportive religious education also relates to learners' emotional resilience and psychological well-being. Garcia et al. (2019) reported that positive experiences in faith-based learning environments foster emotional security, hopefulness, and a clearer sense of purpose among school-aged children. Complementing this work, Gonzalez and Williams (2020) tracked how early religious and moral formation influences ethical frameworks into adulthood, concluding that values internalized during formative school years leave a lasting imprint on personal integrity. As Gearon (2021) cautions, however, these developmental gains depend on whether the classroom functions as an emotionally safe space that respects every learner's dignity.

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

Inclusivity, Pluralism, and Cultural Sensitivity in Religious Education

As enrollment in faith-based schools becomes more pluralistic, scholars have emphasized the need for deliberate pedagogical hospitality. Smith and Jones (2020) examined the experiences of Non-Catholic learners in Catholic schools and argued that staying faithful to Catholic educational values requires actively welcoming religious minorities rather than expecting passive conformity. In the Philippine context, Santos (2020) stressed cultural and religious sensitivity as essential teaching competencies, noting that minority-faith pupils engage more positively when teachers affirm universal moral principles while respecting doctrinal differences.

International curriculum models offer useful comparators. Ubani et al. (2020) analyzed Finland's basic education religious curriculum, which incorporates worldview inclusivity, interreligious dialogue, and respect for non-religious perspectives. Their findings indicate that religious instruction can maintain clear curricular goals while building intercultural literacy and mutual respect among learners from diverse backgrounds.

Challenges, Barriers, and Pedagogical Opportunities for Minority-Faith Pupils

When classroom routines overlook religious diversity, minority-faith learners can experience subtle forms of alienation. Hernandez (2021) documented feelings of awkwardness and cultural disconnect among Non-Catholic students in mandatory religion classes, noting that assumed familiarity with Catholic prayers, sacraments, and liturgical vocabulary can unintentionally position non-Catholic pupils as outsiders. Ipgrave (2020) similarly pointed out that unspoken classroom norms in faith-based schools often create ambiguous boundaries around participation, even when minority-faith pupils and their parents are open to respectful involvement.

Research also points to practical ways educators can bridge these divides. Brown (2021) advocated structured interfaith dialogue and reflective questioning to build empathy and critical thinking. Dela Cruz (2019) recommended weaving multicultural perspectives and open, non-judgmental discussions into lesson plans so all learners feel recognized. Furthermore, Jackson and Everington (2022) emphasized differentiated religious pedagogy that respects varied emotional comfort levels, while Gonzales (2020) showed that visual, creative, and multimedia tasks give diverse learners accessible ways to express moral understanding without relying solely on doctrinal recitation.

Synthesis of Related Literature

Taken together, prior studies show that while religious education supports moral reasoning, emotional resilience, and character formation (Horwitz, 2022; Reyes et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2019), its impact in diverse classrooms depends heavily on cultural sensitivity and inclusive teaching strategies (Smith & Jones, 2020; Santos, 2020; Ubani et al., 2020). Existing literature also reveals that Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils frequently navigate a tension between appreciating universal moral values and feeling hesitant during faith-specific practices (Hernandez, 2021; Ipgrave, 2020). Yet few qualitative studies in Philippine Catholic basic education have directly examined how upper-elementary minority-faith pupils describe their own awareness, feelings, and suggestions regarding the FCL subject. This study addresses that gap at UPHSD – Calamba Campus.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in two complementary frameworks: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and Phenomenology. Together, they capture both the social structure of the classroom and the personal inner experiences of the pupils.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), originating in the work of Lev Vygotsky (2018) and expanded by Aleksei Leontiev and Yrjö Engeström (2019, 2021), views human learning as socially situated and culturally mediated (Postholm & Vennebo, 2020; Hoskins & Ward, 2021). Within CHAT, the FCL classroom functions as an activity system made up of six interacting elements: (a) Subjects—the Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils who bring their own family faith traditions into class; (b)

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

Object—moral growth, spiritual awareness, and meaningful classroom participation; (c) Mediating Artifacts—Catholic teachings, Bible stories, prayers, teacher guidance, and creative tasks such as poster-making and slogan writing; (d) Rules—school policies, grading standards, and implicit norms governing religious participation; (e) Community—Catholic peers, fellow minority-faith classmates, FCL teachers, and parents; and (f) Division of Labor—the roles of the teacher as moral guide and pupils as active learners or respectful observers. Examining this system reveals where classroom norms support inclusion and where subtle tensions arise.

Phenomenology (Neubauer et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2021) pairs naturally with CHAT by focusing on the lived experiences and subjective meanings of the learners themselves. While CHAT maps the institutional and cultural environment of the FCL class, phenomenology illuminates how individual pupils internally feel, interpret, and make sense of their day-to-day participation in a Catholic subject.

Research Paradigm

Philosophically, this study rests on a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology. Constructivism holds that learners actively construct meaning through their social, cultural, and religious interactions rather than passively absorbing fixed facts. Interpretivism maintains that understanding human behavior requires engaging empathetically with participants' own words and perspectives. Guided by this stance, the study uses qualitative inquiry to capture both common patterns and individual nuances in how Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils experience the FCL subject.

Statement of the Problem

In a religiously plural elementary school setting, the awareness, attitudes, and lived experiences of Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils toward Christian-oriented religious instruction remain underexplored. Specifically, this study sought to answer three questions:

1. What are the lived experiences and patterns of classroom engagement of Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils toward the Filipino Christian Living (FCL) subject at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA – Calamba Campus?
2. How do these pupils demonstrate awareness of the relevance and inclusiveness of the FCL lessons, teachings, and classroom practices in relation to their own religious and cultural backgrounds?
3. What suggestions do these pupils offer to make the FCL subject more engaging, inclusive, and respectful of their beliefs?

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological-descriptive research design (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Neubauer et al., 2019; Hunter, 2020). Phenomenology seeks to understand the essence of how individuals perceive and assign meaning to lived experiences within a specific context (Neubauer et al., 2019). Combining phenomenological focus with straightforward qualitative description (Sutton & Austin, 2021) allowed the researcher to stay close to the pupils' own words and age-appropriate expressions without over-abstracting their accounts. This approach is well-suited for exploring sensitive personal topics such as faith, belonging, and classroom emotion among upper-elementary children.

Research Locale and Participants

The study was conducted in the Basic Education Department of the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA – Calamba Campus in Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines. Grades 5 and 6 pupils (typically ages 10 to 12) were chosen because learners at this developmental stage possess growing self-awareness, emerging abstract moral reasoning, and the verbal ability to reflect on social inclusion and personal beliefs.

Using purposive sampling, 16 pupils were selected based on three inclusion criteria: (1) current enrollment in the FCL subject in Grade 5 or Grade 6 at UPHSD – Calamba Campus; (2) verified

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

identification as Non-Catholic and Non-Christian; and (3) willingness and parental/guardian consent to participate in a one-on-one interview. Purposive sampling ensured that participants possessed direct, relevant experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Research Instrument

Data were gathered through a researcher-made, semi-structured interview guide reviewed for age-appropriateness, clarity, and cultural sensitivity. Open-ended core questions and gentle follow-up prompts explored four areas aligned with the research questions: (1) feelings of belonging and peer/teacher interactions during FCL; (2) understanding of what FCL teaches and how it connects to pupils' lives and beliefs; (3) emotional reactions during discussions, recitations, and classroom tasks; and (4) suggestions for making FCL more engaging and respectful of different beliefs. Pupils were encouraged to answer in English, Filipino, or conversational code-switching so they could express themselves naturally.

Data Collection Procedures

Following institutional approval from the Basic Education Department administration, written informed consent was secured from parents or guardians alongside informed assent from each pupil. Individual face-to-face interviews were held in a quiet, comfortable, and child-friendly room on campus. Before beginning, the researcher built rapport by assuring each pupil that there were no right or wrong answers and that their honest views mattered. With permission, each interview lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes and was audio-recorded. Brief field notes capturing non-verbal cues were written immediately afterward, and all recordings were transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Verbatim transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis following the systematic procedures described by Nowell et al. (2020). First, the researcher immersed herself in the data by listening repeatedly to the audio files while reading and checking the transcripts. Second, significant statements reflecting attitudes, feelings, and classroom experiences were highlighted and assigned initial descriptive codes. Third, related codes were compared across all 16 transcripts and grouped into broader conceptual categories. Finally, overarching themes were reviewed and refined against the full dataset and research questions to ensure they accurately reflected participants' voices.

Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

To uphold qualitative rigor in line with Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness criteria (Nowell et al., 2020), four measures were observed. Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement with the transcripts, grounding claims in direct verbatim quotes, and peer debriefing with fellow educators. Transferability was addressed by providing rich descriptions of the school context, participant criteria, and classroom dynamics. Dependability was maintained through a clear audit trail documenting raw transcripts, coding steps, and theme decisions. Confirmability was strengthened through researcher reflexivity—consciously bracketing the researcher's perspective as an educator within the institution so findings remained rooted in the pupils' actual statements.

Ethical Considerations

Because the participants were minors discussing personal religious beliefs, strict ethical standards were followed in accordance with the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2021) and Cohen et al. (2023). Written informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, and voluntary assent was secured from every child after explaining the study in clear, age-appropriate terms. Pupils were informed that participation was completely voluntary, would not affect their FCL grades, and could be stopped at any time without penalty. All names were replaced with pseudonyms during transcription, and recordings and transcripts were stored securely.

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

RESULTS

Thematic analysis of the 16 interviews identified five major themes that capture how Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils experience and interpret the FCL subject: (1) Sense of Belonging and Inclusion, (2) Understanding and Association with the FCL Subject, (3) Emotional Responses and Engagement, (4) Teaching Methods and Classroom Activities, and (5) Suggestions for Improvement. Table 1 summarizes these themes, their frequency distribution across participants, and illustrative verbatim excerpts.

Table 1. *Summary of Emergent Themes, Participant Frequency (N = 16), and Representative Excerpts*

Major Theme	Key Patterns	Frequency (n/16)	Representative Excerpts
1. Sense of Belonging and Inclusion	Peer warmth and classroom acceptance; occasional exclusion tied to belief differences or unclear norms	9 (Belonging) 4 (Exclusion)	"I feel I always belong to the class." "Minsan po kasi iba ang aming paniniwala." "I feel left out when I'm not joining, but I like to join, and my parents are allowing me."
2. Understanding and Association with FCL	Focus on universal moral values and general beliefs about God; isolated disconnection from Catholic concepts	14 (Clear grasp) 1 (Disconnected)	"It reminds me about God, the way He created the world." "She always reminds us to be good and helpers of God, whatever we believe in." "Wala po akong maisip."
3. Emotional Responses and Engagement	Happiness, excitement, and pride in being included; nervousness during oral recitation	8 (Positive) 3 (Anxious)	"I feel very honored even though I am not Catholic; I am given the chance to participate." "I feel anxious because I might be called on and give the wrong answer."
4. Teaching Methods and Classroom Activities	High enjoyment of creative, visual tasks (slogans, posters, stories); preference for individual expression	10 (Creative engagement)	"I am enjoying it because of the different activities like slogan and poster making, which give me ideas about the image of God."
5. Suggestions for Improvement	General satisfaction with current class; requests for more Bible stories and lessons on other faiths	12 (Satisfied) 4 (Suggestions)	"Fine as it is." Requests to include more Bible-based stories and brief lessons about other religions.

Note. Remaining participants expressed neutral or mixed views within individual thematic categories.

Theme 1: *Sense of Belonging and Inclusion*

Most participants reported feeling genuinely accepted in their FCL classes, with 9 out of 16 pupils stating that they felt a strong sense of belonging. When explaining why they felt comfortable, pupils repeatedly pointed to everyday friendships with their classmates. Comments such as "I feel I always belong to the class" and "My classmates are my friends" show that among Grades 5 and 6 learners, daily peer camaraderie often outweighs differences in religious affiliation.

At the same time, 4 out of 16 pupils described moments of feeling left out. Some connected this discomfort directly to differences in faith, saying, "Minsan po kasi iba ang aming paniniwala" ("Sometimes it's because our beliefs are different"), and "I feel left out because sometimes I can feel the class doesn't understand me." One remark was especially revealing: a pupil who wanted to join class religious

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

activities—and whose parents allowed it—shared, "I feel left out when I'm not joining, but I like to join, and my parents are allowing me."

Theme 2: ***Understanding and Association with the FCL Subject***

Even though they did not share the Catholic faith, 14 out of 16 pupils showed a clear grasp of what the FCL subject is about. Rather than viewing FCL purely as sectarian catechism, pupils connected the course to universal moral values—such as kindness, honesty, obedience, and respect—and to a broad belief in God. One pupil explained, "It reminds me about God, the way He created the world," showing how lessons on creation and goodness resonated naturally with learners from other monotheistic and spiritual traditions.

Pupils also credited their FCL teacher for framing lessons in an inclusive, affirming way. As one learner noted, "She always reminds us to be good and helpers of God, whatever we believe in."

By contrast, 1 pupil answered, "Wala po akong maisip" ("I cannot think of anything"), signaling a sense of disconnection from the subject.

Theme 3: ***Emotional Responses and Engagement***

Pupils' emotional reactions to FCL combined genuine pride and enjoyment with occasional performance anxiety. Half of the participants (8 out of 16) reported predominantly positive emotions during FCL periods, citing happiness, excitement, and a sense of honor. One pupil shared a particularly moving reflection: "I feel very honored even though I am not Catholic; I am given the chance to participate."

However, 3 out of 16 pupils reported feeling nervous or anxious, especially during oral recitations or doctrine-specific questioning. One pupil admitted, "I feel anxious because I might be called on and give the wrong answer."

Theme 4: ***Teaching Methods and Classroom Activities***

Classroom activities proved to be one of the strongest bridges across religious differences. Ten out of 16 participants highlighted their enjoyment of hands-on, creative tasks such as slogan-making, poster design, and storytelling. These visual and narrative activities helped pupils grasp abstract spiritual ideas in concrete ways. As one pupil explained, "I am enjoying it because of the different activities like slogan and poster making, which give me ideas about the image of God."

At the same time, several learners noted that they preferred individual, written, or artistic tasks over spontaneous whole-class recitation because of shyness or fear of giving an incorrect answer.

Theme 5: ***Suggestions for Improvement***

When asked how FCL could be improved, 12 out of 16 pupils said they were already satisfied, describing the subject as "fine as it is." Their satisfaction reflected warm teacher rapport and enjoyable creative projects. Even so, 4 pupils offered thoughtful, constructive ideas. Two recommended including more Bible-based stories, pointing to the appeal of narrative learning for upper-elementary children.

Notably, one pupil suggested adding brief lessons about other religions so classmates could better understand and respect every faith represented in the room.

DISCUSSION

Theme 1: ***Sense of Belonging and Inclusion***

This pattern supports Ghosn-Chelala and Power's (2021) observation that warm peer relationships serve as a primary foundation for inclusion in multicultural classrooms.

Viewed through Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, this moment highlights an unintentional friction between unspoken classroom rules and a pupil's desire to belong. Exclusion in faith-based classes does not always come from family restrictions or peer hostility; sometimes it happens when teachers or classmates assume non-Catholic pupils should sit out rather than asking what level of participation they and

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

their parents prefer. As Ipgrave (2020) notes, educators in pluralistic faith schools must make participation norms explicit so minority-faith pupils are neither pressured against their beliefs nor inadvertently sidelined.

Theme 2: ***Understanding and Association with the FCL Subject***

That kind of teacher mediation reflects what Miedema and Bertram-Troost (2021) describe as worldview-sensitive teaching: anchoring religious lessons in shared human dignity so every pupil feels recognized. These accounts also align with Reyes et al. (2019) and Lee et al. (2018), confirming that when religious instruction emphasizes ethical living, learners across faith backgrounds appreciate its practical value.

Consistent with Hernandez (2021), pupils who enter a Catholic classroom with little prior exposure to Christian scripture or church vocabulary may struggle to engage when lessons rely heavily on denominational terms without connecting them to familiar everyday experiences.

Theme 3: ***Emotional Responses and Engagement***

When teachers actively invite minority-faith learners to contribute their thoughts, pupils experience affirmation rather than marginalization. Several learners also expressed healthy curiosity about learning how Catholic beliefs compare with their own, echoing Brown's (2021) finding that respectful exposure to religious difference encourages empathy and openness.

For Non-Catholic and Non-Christian learners, answering doctrinal questions aloud in front of Catholic classmates carries heightened social pressure, since unfamiliarity with Catholic terms or prayers can trigger fear of making a public mistake. As Gearon (2021) emphasizes, ethical religious education requires building psychologically safe classrooms where pupils can share reflections without fear of embarrassment.

Theme 4: ***Teaching Methods and Classroom Activities***

Creative projects allowed pupils to express shared moral values—such as love, gratitude, and care for creation—through their own personal perspectives without requiring strict doctrinal recitation.

This preference reinforces Jackson and Everington's (2022) call for differentiated pedagogy in religious education, giving pupils multiple ways to participate according to their comfort levels and learning styles.

Theme 5: ***Suggestions for Improvement***

Even in Grades 5 and 6, pupils recognize the value of interreligious awareness in a diverse school community. This suggestion aligns closely with Ubani et al.'s (2020) worldview-inclusive approach, Dela Cruz's (2019) recommendation to integrate multicultural perspectives, and Ipgrave's (2020) emphasis on respectful classroom dialogue.

Integrated Theoretical Synthesis

Bringing together Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 2021; Postholm & Vennebo, 2020) and Phenomenology (Neubauer et al., 2019) clarifies how classroom structures shape pupils' lived feelings in FCL. When mediating tools (such as poster-making, slogan design, and relatable stories) and classroom community norms (peer friendships and affirming teacher reminders) align with pupils' personal identities, Non-Catholic and Non-Christian learners experience pride, moral clarity, and genuine belonging. Conversely, when unspoken norms around religious participation remain unclear or when oral doctrinal questioning dominates, friction emerges in the activity system—experienced by pupils as hesitation, recitation anxiety, or quiet exclusion. Addressing those small classroom friction points allows UPHSD – Calamba Campus to preserve its Catholic character while ensuring every pupil thrives.

Limitations

This investigation focused exclusively on the awareness, attitudes, emotional responses, and lived experiences of Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils enrolled in FCL at the University of

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 11 (November 2026)

Perpetual Help System DALTA – Calamba Campus. Because the sample consisted of 16 pupils from one private Catholic institution and two upper-elementary grade levels, the findings are not intended for statistical generalization; rather, they offer qualitative transferability through detailed contextual description. Moreover, the study does not evaluate Catholic theology or compare the doctrinal truth claims of different religions, focusing instead on learners' classroom perceptions and socio-emotional engagement. Although interviews with children carry potential social desirability bias, age-appropriate rapport building, researcher reflexivity, and systematic thematic verification were used to protect data credibility.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the awareness, views, and lived experiences of Grades 5 and 6 Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils toward the Filipino Christian Living (FCL) subject at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA – Calamba Campus. The findings show that most minority-faith learners feel welcomed, accepted, and engaged in FCL, supported by warm peer friendships, encouraging teachers, and creative classroom activities. Regardless of their religious background, pupils consistently recognize FCL as a meaningful space for learning universal virtues such as kindness, respect, honesty, and responsibility, affirming the practical relevance of the school's "Character Building is Nation Building" mission.

At the same time, localized experiences of oral recitation anxiety, conceptual disconnection, and subtle exclusion caused by unclear participation norms point to clear opportunities for instructional growth. By listening to pupils' voices—incorporating varied modes of participation, enriching lessons with Bible-based storytelling, and introducing brief, respectful discussions of other faith traditions—Catholic schools can remain deeply faithful to their religious identity while welcoming and empowering every learner.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Sustain Creative and Differentiated Teaching Strategies: FCL teachers should continue using storytelling, poster-making, and slogan design while offering low-anxiety alternatives to whole-class oral recitation—such as think-pair-share, reflective journaling, and choice-based projects—so shy or non-Catholic pupils can participate comfortably.
2. Clarify Inclusive Participation Guidelines Early in the Term: At the start of each school year, FCL teachers should clearly explain respectful participation options for prayers and religious activities so Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils whose parents permit involvement feel welcomed to join, while those who observe respectfully never feel singled out.
3. Incorporate Age-Appropriate Interfaith Awareness: While preserving the Catholic foundation of the curriculum, FCL lessons can include brief, respectful discussions highlighting shared moral principles—such as compassion, honesty, and the Golden Rule—across world religions represented in class.
4. Strengthen Psychological Safety and Guidance Collaboration: FCL teachers and Basic Education guidance counselors should coordinate to support learners who experience recitation anxiety or cultural disconnect, fostering a classroom culture where questions about unfamiliar religious terms are welcomed without judgment.
5. Maintain Open Communication with Parents and Guardians: School administrators and FCL teachers should hold regular orientations or open dialogues with parents of Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils to clarify FCL goals, respect family boundaries, and build mutual trust.
6. Include Minority-Faith Pupil Feedback in Curriculum Reviews and Faculty Training: UPHSD – Calamba Campus should incorporate feedback from religiously diverse learners into periodic FCL curriculum evaluations and provide faculty workshops on cultural sensitivity, interfaith dialogue, and inclusive pedagogy.

7. Expand Future Research: Future investigators may build on this qualitative foundation through multi-campus studies across CEAP member schools or mixed-methods designs that also capture the perspectives of FCL teachers, Catholic classmates, and parents.

REFERENCES

British Educational Research Association. (2021). *Ethical guidelines for educational research* (4th ed.). https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2021

Brown, A. (2021). Fostering interfaith dialogue and respect in religious education programs. *Journal of Religious Education, 45*(2), 189–205.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2023). *Research methods in education* (9th ed.). Routledge.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2021). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Dela Cruz, M. (2019). Incorporating multicultural perspectives in religious education: Strategies for creating inclusive learning environments. *Religious Studies Review, 43*(3), 321–336.

Engeström, Y. (2019). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Engeström, Y. (2021). Transforming online teacher training through expansive learning: A case study applying Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and the Change Laboratory method. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 30*(6), 495–507.

Garcia, R. S., Hernandez, M. L., & Lee, J. (2019). The perception of religious education on pupils' overall well-being: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 111*(4), 589–602.

Gearon, L. (2021). Safe spaces in religious education: Ethics, pedagogy, and inclusion. *Journal of Beliefs & Values, 42*(1), 18–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2020.1865734

Ghosn-Chelala, M., & Power, S. A. (2021). Cultivating inclusive peer interactions in multicultural classrooms: The role of dialogue and mutual respect. *Multicultural Education Review, 13*(2), 83–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2021.1910127

Gonzales, T. F. (2020). Technology and inclusive education practices in religious education programs. *Journal of Technology in Education, 33*(1), 45–60.

Gonzalez, M. E., & Williams, K. L. (2020). Religious identity and values formation: A longitudinal study of college pupils. *Journal of Moral and Ethical Studies, 28*(2), 112–129.

Hernandez, L. (2021). Experiences of Non-Catholic pupils in religious education classes: Barriers and strategies for inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 25*(6), 769–784.

Horwitz, I. M. (2022). *God, grades, and graduation: Religion's surprising impact on academic success*. Oxford University Press.

Hoskins, B. J., & Ward, J. (2021). Making use of Vygotsky in the primary classroom. In A. Smith (Ed.), *Vygotsky in educational psychology: Theoretical and pedagogical implications of sociohistorical psychology* (pp. 87–103). Routledge.

Hunter, D. (2020). Qualitative research in education: A user's guide for researchers and practitioners. *Educational Research International, 9*(1), 45–58.

Ipgrave, J. (2020). Negotiating religious difference in classroom practices: Challenges and opportunities. *British Journal of Religious Education, 42*(3), 249–261. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2020.1734887

Jackson, R., & Everington, J. (2022). Inclusive pedagogy for religious education: Responding to diversity in schools. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality, 27*(1), 21–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2022.2030189

Kurniawan, D. A., Asrial, A., Aprizal, L., Maison, M., & Zurweni, Z. (2022). The role of religion and culture on student attitudes in science learning. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences, 17*(6), 1983–2000.

Lee, C. H., Santos, A. B., & Brown, R. J. (2018). Longitudinal study on the perception of religious education on pupils' moral reasoning. *Journal of Moral Education, 47*(3), 321–336.

Miedema, S., & Bertram-Troost, G. (2021). Religious education in plural societies: Challenges for teachers and policy. *Religious Education, 116*(2), 167–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2021.1879936

Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, *8*(2), 90–97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2020). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *19*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920943030

Postholm, M. B., & Vennebo, K. F. (2020). *Applying Cultural-Historical Activity Theory in educational settings: Learning, development and research*. Routledge.

Reyes, J. A., Smith, M. C., & Jones, K. L. (2019). Significance of religious education in promoting moral development among pupils. *Journal of Moral Development*, *45*(2), 201–215.

Santos, A. B. (2020). Promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within religious education programs. *Journal of Religious Diversity*, *38*(4), 567–582.

Smith, M. C., & Jones, K. L. (2020). Challenges and opportunities for Non-Catholic and Non-Christian pupils in Catholic schools. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, *24*(3), 45–60.

Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2021). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, *74*(2), 75–79. https://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v74i2.3177

Ubani, M., Hyvärinen, E., Lemettinen, J., & Hirvonen, E. (2020). Dialogue, worldview inclusivity, and intra-religious diversity: Addressing diversity through religious education in the Finnish basic education curriculum. *Religions*, *11*(11), 581. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11110581

Vygotsky, L. S. (2018). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.