Language Message Patterns and Positive Behaviors of Academic Leaders towards Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores how academic leaders use language and everyday communication behaviors to advance inclusive education within their institutions. Moving beyond policy analysis, the research investigates the relational dimension of leadership communication specifically how intentional language choices, tone modulation, and positive interpersonal practices shape inclusive school cultures. Using a qualitative exploratory design, the study engaged twenty-five (25) academic leaders through semi-structured interviews, drawing out in-depth narratives on how they communicate across diverse educational settings. Reflexive thematic analysis revealed that leaders intentionally adopt empathetic, respectful, and culturally responsive communication to promote psychological safety, mutual trust, and belonging. Findings highlight the strategic use of inclusive phrasing, emotionally intelligent delivery, and context-sensitive language as core tools in reducing stigma, affirming diversity, and strengthening institutional cohesion. Furthermore, the modeling of unbiased respect, presence in marginalized spaces, and values-based assertiveness emerged as key leadership behaviors that legitimize inclusion in practice. While the study offers context-specific insight, its scope is limited to leadership perspectives and may not encompass the full spectrum of stakeholder experiences. Nonetheless, the findings underscore that inclusive leadership is most impactful when communication is used not merely to inform, but to connect, affirm, and transform. Further research is encouraged to explore how these communicative practices are interpreted by students, faculty, and other school community members to build a more comprehensive understanding of inclusion in action

Keywords: Language, Message Pattern, Positive Behaviors, Academic Leaders, Inclusive Education

1. INTRODUCTON

Inclusive education has become a global imperative, advocating for the equal participation of all learners regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. Academic institutions play a pivotal role in actualizing this vision, and much of their success depends on the attitudes, decisions, and communication styles of their leaders. According to (Daoud & Mabrouk, 2023), the way leaders convey messages not only influences institutional culture but also shapes how inclusion is perceived and practiced by stakeholders. Inclusive leadership is therefore not only a matter of policy but a matter of language and relational behavior.

Language, as argued by (Shevchenko, 2021), is a powerful social tool that does more than transmit information, it constructs realities, defines norms, and either bridges or deepens divides. In this context, the language patterns used by academic leaders hold significant weight in creating a climate of acceptance and respect. Language serves as a vital tool through which human emotions and thoughts are conveyed; as such, the effectiveness of communication in leadership heavily relies on the richness and appropriateness of language use. Garil et al. (2024) emphasizes the significance of linguistic richness particularly in terms of expressive style as essential for ideas to be clearly and meaningfully understood. Language delivery in academic training, therefore, ranges from formal and structured formats to more casual and interactive modes, reflecting the varied needs of learners (Yunaldi, 2021).

In inclusive educational settings, where students of diverse backgrounds learn collaboratively, the use of clear, inclusive, and empathetic language becomes even more critical. Leon et al. (2024) note that inclusive education involves students from different backgrounds sharing experiences such as classroom learning, field trips, and extracurricular activities, which are greatly enhanced through communicative clarity and sensitivity. However, while institutional policies may express commitments to inclusion, it is often the daily interactions and message framing of leaders that determine whether such values are truly enacted (Mor Barak et al., 2021). Leaders who intentionally use inclusive language and foster empathetic dialogue contribute directly to a culture where diversity is embraced.

Meanwhile, positive communicative behaviors such as active listening, consistent affirmation, inclusive modeling, support trust and collaboration within academic communities (Oyeronke et al., 2024). These behaviors significantly support the implementation of inclusive practices, particularly when they are embedded in leadership routines and interpersonal engagements. According to (Dey et al., 2022), leadership that aligns verbal advocacy with observable actions helps legitimize inclusive values and promotes sustainable transformation across institutional levels. Without this alignment, inclusive efforts risk being perceived as superficial or performative.

Although much has been written about inclusive education from structural and curricular perspectives, there remains a gap in understanding how language and interpersonal communication specifically contribute to inclusive leadership. Existing research often underplays the impact of subtle language choices and the relational dynamics they produce. Exploring how academic leaders adjust their message patterns when interacting with diverse stakeholders can provide critical insight into the emotional and psychological dimensions of inclusion, especially within

hierarchical educational settings (Ghamrawi et al., 2024).

This study aims to explore the language message patterns and positive communicative behaviors exhibited by academic leaders that foster inclusive practices. Focusing on the lived communicative experiences of these leaders, the research seeks to understand how inclusion is advanced not only through policy but through everyday language and behavior. This inquiry is essential to broadening the lens of inclusive education research and strengthening the development of inclusive leadership practices across educational institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language Patterns in Educational Leadership

The language used by academic leaders defines how inclusive values are communicated, interpreted, and implemented in educational institutions. Leaders influence not only operational practices but also institutional mindsets through the structure, tone, and intentionality of their speech. According to Harris, (2011) and Ghamrawi et al. (2024) message patterns in leadership discourse influence how members of the academic community perceive diversity, collaboration, and shared responsibility. Leaders who express affirming, respectful, and inclusive language are more likely to build climates where all stakeholders feel acknowledged and empowered (Nicola & Thomas, 2004). Inclusive language reflects deliberate efforts to frame communication in ways that respect differences and recognize diverse identities. This includes adopting gender-sensitive pronouns, avoiding exclusionary terms, and using language that highlights unity rather than hierarchy (Villanueva-Jordán &Sales-Salvador, 2024).

Research suggests that consistent use of inclusive expressions fosters environments where people feel psychologically safe and valued (Garrick et al., 2024). Inclusive Education (IE) is fundamentally grounded in the principle that 'Education is for All,' and this guiding philosophy is operationalized through communicative inclusivity. Cabañero (2023) characterizes IE as an educational framework built on the philosophy of acceptance, an idea that must be reflected not only in institutional policy but also in the way leaders communicate with and about diverse learners. The analysis of language patterns therefore provides insight into the actual mechanisms through which leaders support or hinder inclusive educational practices. Rather than being incidental, the language choices of academic leaders reveal their commitment to inclusion at the operational and cultural levels.

2.2 Positive Communicative Behaviors and Inclusive Practice

Inclusive leadership is demonstrated not only through language content but also through the behavioral quality of interpersonal communication. When leaders engage in active listening, express empathy, and provide constructive feedback, they establish norms that promote mutual respect and cooperation (Babatunde et al., 2023; Long & Toney-Butler, 2023). These communicative behaviors help shape a relational culture where dialogue is encouraged, and differing perspectives are treated with openness and dignity.

Leaders who consistently model inclusive behaviors contribute directly to the formation of environments that welcome diversity and reduce exclusion. These behaviors function as part of the institution's communicative infrastructure, setting expectations for how members of the academic community relate to one another. Faculty and staff often emulate the communication patterns

of those in leadership, making relational modeling a strategic component of inclusion efforts (Marbun et al., 2023). As noted by (George & Marius, 2017), positive communicative practices enhance trust, improve collaboration, and minimize resistance to institutional change. The behavioral dimension of leadership, particularly in how it facilitates or disrupts inclusivity, must therefore be analyzed alongside verbal communication to fully understand its impact on school culture.

2.3 Local Studies

Empirical studies within the Philippine education system reveal that culturally grounded communication is essential to the success of inclusive leadership. Filipino academic leaders often operate within relational frameworks that emphasize empathy, respect, and collective well-being (Henry & Crizjale, 2024). Leadership communication in the local context is most effective when it incorporates values such as pakikipagkapwa, which emphasizes relational interconnectedness and mutual understanding. Leaders who adopt culturally appropriate language and relational styles are more successful in engaging staff, students, and community stakeholders in inclusive initiatives (Muhamad & Hermanto, 2024).

Additionally, local findings indicate that communication must adapt to linguistic and cultural diversity. In regions with multiple dialects and distinct socio-cultural norms, academic leaders are expected to adjust their messaging styles to maintain engagement and relevance (Zhang, 2023). According to (Murwanto, 2024), successful leaders in such contexts are those who respect local identities through inclusive and participatory discourse. This includes recognizing local holidays, using regional languages during assemblies, and actively consulting stakeholders during decision-making. These practices demonstrate that inclusive leadership is not merely administrative but deeply communicative and context sensitive.

2.4 Foreign Studies

International research reinforces the link between leadership communication and inclusive institutional outcomes. Studies conducted in multicultural educational systems highlight that leaders who center equity and respect in their communication are more likely to build environments characterized by shared accountability and belonging (Eden et al., 2024; Alam & Mohanty, 2023). Inclusive leadership, in these studies, is frequently associated with the strategic use of language to elevate marginalized perspectives, clarify institutional values, and reduce bias in decision-making processes. According to (Ehibor et al., 2025), language functions as a primary medium through which leadership ideals are conveyed and sustained. In addition to verbal articulation, research also highlights the importance of aligning communication with action.

Leaders who maintain consistency between what they say and what they do establish credibility, which in turn strengthens stakeholder engagement and institutional trust (Kleynhans et al., 2022). This alignment is a key factor in the long-term success of inclusive reforms, as it fosters a culture of accountability and authenticity. Institutions led by communicatively competent leaders demonstrate stronger implementation of inclusive policies and greater responsiveness to diverse needs (Tampubolon et al., 2023). These findings support the need for continued analysis of how leadership language and communicative behavior shape the operational realities of inclusive education.

2.5 The Role of Leadership Communication in Building Inclusive Relationships

Communication is central to the development of relationships within academic institutions, particularly between leaders and their constituents (Erbay et al., 2024). Inclusive leadership cannot be sustained through isolated policies or directives; it requires continuous relational work grounded in respectful and meaningful communication. According to (Tingvold et al., 2021), relationships built on open, two-way communication foster a sense of mutual respect and shared purpose, which are essential for inclusive institutional cultures.

The communicative relationship between academic leaders and their faculty or students is especially critical in environments marked by differences. When leaders invest in relationships by being present, listening actively, and validating individual experiences, they lay the groundwork for an inclusive culture where everyone has a voice (Sharma et al., 2023; Randel et al., 2017). This relational dimension supports inclusive practices not through formal declarations alone, but through the lived experience of being heard, supported, and engaged by those in leadership.

2.6 Conceptual Grounding on Leadership and Inclusion

This study is further supported by theoretical frameworks that link communication, leadership, and inclusion. Transformational leadership theory, for example, posits that effective leaders inspire change by articulating vision, demonstrating care, and modeling ethical behavior, all of which are deeply communicative actions (Lee, 2023). Inclusive leadership, as a developing construct, expands this idea by integrating respect for diversity, collaboration, and equity into the communicative practices of leadership (Hengameh & Sarwar, ,2024).

Additionally, social constructionism provides a useful lens in understanding how language contributes to the construction of reality within educational institutions (Saleem et al., 2021; Cojocaru et al., 2012). The words and communicative behaviors of academic leaders do not merely reflect policy; they actively shape institutional narratives and guide collective action. Applying these conceptual perspectives, this study underscores the importance of examining how leadership communication functions as both a relational and strategic tool for inclusive education.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative exploratory design to capture the authentic experiences and insights of academic leaders concerning their communicative behaviors and language patterns in promoting inclusive education. A qualitative approach was essential given the study's focus on understanding lived experiences, relational dynamics, and context-specific meaning-making, which are not easily quantifiable. Qualitative research is particularly useful when the objective is to investigate social interactions, perceptions, and behaviors in natural settings (Dagoy et al., 2024).

The exploratory nature of this study allowed for flexible inquiry, accommodating the complexity and depth of leadership communication within diverse educational environments. Rather than testing hypotheses, the study sought to illuminate how communication serves as a leadership tool in fostering inclusion. Through in-depth, reflective engagement with participants, the research aimed to generate thematic understandings that could inform practice and policy. Exploratory designs are well-suited for

under-examined topics where existing literature is limited or emerging, such as leadership language in localized educational contexts (Savellon et al., 2024).

3.2 Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. The guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives about the respondents' use of language, tone, messaging, and everyday communicative behaviors in the context of inclusive leadership. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to probe deeply while maintaining consistency across interviews (Lamorinas et al., 2025). This format was ideal for encouraging academic leaders to share personal reflections, provide specific examples, and discuss sensitive or value-driven aspects of their leadership practices. These tools helped capture the discourse patterns that underlie professional identity, a method also supported in the investigation of communicative norms and professional behavior among educators.

Objectives	Interview Questions
To explore the language message patterns used by academic leaders that promote inclusivity and support within educational settings.	1. Can you share specific phrases or communication styles you use when addressing issues of inclusion and diversity? 2. How do you adjust your language when communicating with individuals or groups from diverse backgrounds? 3. What role do you think your choice of words and tone plays in promoting a culture of inclusion within your institution?
To examine how the positive communicative behaviors of academic leaders influence inclusive practices and relationships within their institutions.	4. How do your everyday communication behaviors (e.g., active listening, encouragement) impact relationships with staff and students? 5. Can you describe a situation where your positive communication influenced an inclusive decision or action within the institution? 6. In what ways do you model inclusive behavior through your interactions and communication with the school community?

3.3 Sampling

The study utilized purposive sampling to identify academic leaders who were directly involved in decision-making, supervision, and institutional leadership within their respective schools. A total of eighteen (n = 25) participants were selected based on their roles as principals, program heads, department chairs, or similar administrative positions. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative studies when the goal is to select information-rich participants with deep familiarity and experience related to the research topic (Abdurasul et al., 2025). All participants were selected based on their active involvement in

fostering inclusion within their schools or academic programs. Their leadership roles positioned them to directly influence institutional culture, language use, and communicative norms. The diversity in their professional backgrounds enhanced the study's capacity to draw meaningful comparisons across different leadership experiences.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Data was collected through one-on-one interview. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality protocols were explained prior to the start of the conversation. The process ensured accurate and honest accounts of participants' experiences. This approach aligns with established practices in qualitative research

3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, a method that allows for flexible interpretation of patterns across qualitative data sets. This approach involves several key stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, theme review, definition and naming of themes, and final write-up (Bucoy et al., 2024). The researcher engaged deeply with the interview transcripts through repeated reading to capture meaning units related to language patterns and communicative behaviors. The use of thematic analysis was informed by prior studies examining discourse and communicative elements within professional and leadership settings (Prokopis,2023; Neuendorf, 2018), ensuring analytical rigor and contextual sensitivity.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was strictly observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was secured from each participant after providing a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Participants were assured that their identities would remain anonymous and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without consequences. Ethical research in qualitative studies requires ongoing respect for participant autonomy, privacy, and dignity (Eungoo & Hee-Joong, 2023). These principles guided every stage of the research process, ensuring that all participants were treated with fairness and care.

4. RESULTS

Objective 1. To explore the language message patterns used by academic leaders that promote inclusivity and support within educational settings.

Question 1: Can you share specific phrases or communication styles you use when addressing issues of inclusion and diversity?

1.1. Empathetic and Non-Labeling Language

Thirteen (13) participants expressed a deliberate choice to use language that upholds empathy and rejects labels that may marginalize learners. Rather than referring to students as sources of difficulty, these leaders focus on words and phrases that convey shared responsibility and encourage collaboration in addressing learners' needs. This linguistic approach supports a school culture where every student is viewed as capable and valued, promoting both psychological safety and dignity. The leaders' message patterns mirror culturally rooted values of compassion, understanding, and collective care, which influence how challenges are framed and addressed within the school community.

> "*I intentionally use phrases that promote empathy and equal opportunity. I often say, "No child will be left behind," which our teachers and students have come to*

adopt as a shared mindset. I also encourage teachers to ask, "How can we help this child?" instead of labeling a student as a "problem."

"Empathy. I consistently emphasize the significance of existing in a society where differences are not questioned but rather acknowledged… The most effective means of comprehension is through the application of empathy in every situation, weighing both perspectives."

"I encourage discussions that center on understanding student needs instead of labeling them. I help the team reframe their language so that our communication encourages participation and dignity."

1.2. Respectful and Collaborative Framing

Eleven (11) participants described how their leadership communication centers on respectful and cooperative phrasing to strengthen group cohesion. Intentionally avoiding divisive or authoritarian tones, they promote an atmosphere of mutual respect among faculty and staff. These leaders view language as a tool for influence not through authority alone but through building rapport and shared vision. Their use of affirming expressions facilitates inclusive dialogue, encourages reflective thinking, and helps establish a professional environment where individuals are empowered to contribute. This approach strengthens team dynamics and models the values expected in a diverse academic setting.

"When I guide my colleagues, I focus on using respectful and collaborative language… I don't tolerate words that exclude or belittle."

"The goal is to use language that reflects institutional values while maintaining respect for individual differences… especially among faculty and staff."

1.3 Clarity-Oriented and Policy-Aligned Communicative Style

Six (6) academic leader emphasized a professionalized communication approach that avoids emotionally loaded or ambiguous expressions. Aligning language with institutional policies and avoiding emotionally charged or vague expressions, they ensure that communication remains professional and consistent across all levels of interaction. This deliberate communicative style fosters transparency and avoids potential misunderstandings, especially in contexts where inclusive messaging is essential.

"I prioritize clarity, respect, and neutrality. I avoid emotionally charged language or vague generalizations. I ensure that communication remains policy-aligned and professional, without marginalizing any individual or group."

Question 2. How do you adjust your language when communicating with individuals or groups from diverse backgrounds?

2.1. Culturally Attuned and Language-Adapted Communication

Seventeen (17) academic leaders highlighted the value of adjusting their language to fit the cultural, emotional, and linguistic backgrounds of their audiences. This includes using simpler terms, translating into familiar dialects when necessary, and being conscious of the cultural context of their listeners, especially

when communicating with indigenous families, rural communities, or emotionally sensitive individuals. This practice goes beyond surface-level politeness; it reflects deep cultural empathy and respect for diversity.

> *"When I talk to parents, especially those from Indigenous or Muslim families, I use Filipino or even simple words in their dialect when possible… I believe that adjusting our language is a form of respect and care."*
>
> *"When I talk to parents or guardians from far-flung barangays, I make sure my words are simple and respectful… With students who are emotionally sensitive, I choose words that reassure and encourage, not intimidate."*
>
> *"I consider cultural, linguistic, and socio-academic contexts when communicating… I avoid using technical or exclusive terminology unless necessary… and I ensure that the message is easily understood."*

2.2. Tone-Mindful and Emotionally Sensitive Adjustments

Twelve (12) leaders described how they regulate their tone and delivery to suit diverse interpersonal contexts. Whether engaging with students, parents, or staff from different cultural or social backgrounds, they consciously lower their voice, frame feedback as questions rather than critiques, and avoid confrontational expressions. These adjustments are not merely stylistic; they represent a deep understanding of how tone influences perception and emotional safety.

> *"I lower my voice and ask questions rather than confronting them with accusations."*
>
> *"I adjust my tone and word choice… I'm careful not to make assumptions, and I try to listen more than I speak when cultural or personal differences are involved."*

2.3. Fairness-Oriented

Ten (10) participants articulated a strong preference for using fair, neutral, and inclusive language across all communications. They actively avoid assumptions based on background, status, or culture, and choose vocabulary that promotes equal understanding among all recipients. Their communication style is marked by a commitment to accessibility, rejecting elitist or overly technical language that could alienate certain groups.

> *"A universal language would be the optimal choice… I ensure that I maintain a fair tone to avoid offending others… I also express genuine interest."*
>
> *"I refrain from assumptions and instead focus on fairness, inclusion, and accessibility in both written and verbal communication."*

Question 3. What role do you think your choice of words and tone plays in promoting a culture of inclusion within your institution?

3.1. Intentional Messaging and Reflective Communication

Eighteen (18) academic leaders viewed their communication practices as intentional reflections of their leadership values. Their choice of words and tone is not spontaneous but purposefully considered to align with

institutional goals and foster a sense of community and mutual respect. They believe that every formal or informal conversation has the power to shape attitudes and relationships within the institution. Their responses highlight a leadership approach where communication is a proactive strategy to sustain an inclusive and values-driven academic culture.

> *"As principal, the way I speak reflects how I view my constituents. So, I choose to speak in a way that motivates, rather than instills fear or shame."*
>
> *"Amplifying my approach would be the most beneficial to promote positive inclusion within the school community."*
>
> *"The way we speak says a lot about the values we embody as leaders. When my tone is calm and my words are inclusive, I feel that others mirror the same."*

3.2. Tone as a Tool

Sixteen (16) participants emphasized that tone plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional climate of the school. More than just word choice, the delivery whether warm and affirming or cold and authoritative can influence how messages are received and interpreted. These leaders make a conscious effort to use calm, empathetic, and motivating tones, especially in emotionally charged or high-pressure situations. They view tone as a powerful instrument for reducing tension, fostering psychological safety, and reinforcing trust across all levels of the institution. Their approach underscores the belief that leadership communication must be not only strategic but also emotionally responsive and people centered.

> *"Word choice and tone significantly influence the emotional climate of the school. A word said in a rough way, even if correct, can shut someone down."*
>
> *"My communication practices are deliberate and affirming. I see my tone as a key to making people feel welcome and understood."*
>
> *"Everyday communication may seem small, but it builds or breaks trust over time."*

Objective 2. To examine how the positive communicative behaviors of academic leaders influence inclusive practices and relationships within their institutions.

Question 4. How do your everyday communication behaviors (e.g., active listening, encouragement) impact relationships with staff and students?

4.1 Cultivating Trust and Openness

Twenty-one (21) participants expressed that active listening and attentiveness in daily communication play a crucial role in fostering trust and psychological safety among both staff and students. When school leaders intentionally create space for honest conversations and listen without judgment, it empowers individuals to speak up early whether about personal concerns, professional challenges, or ideas for improvement. This communication behavior not only reduces fear but also encourages openness and mutual respect, which are essential to building a healthy, inclusive school environment where innovation and collaboration are more likely to flourish.

> *"When a teacher feels that I am listening to them, even when there's a problem, they don't immediately feel afraid."*

"Good communication behaviors foster trust and good rapport. Taking time to actively listen to others encourages openness and sharing of innovative ideas."

"I make time to listen to students when they approach me, especially those who don't usually speak up."

"I give attention to what is being communicated, respond appropriately, and acknowledge contributions regardless of position."

4.2 Encouragement and Affirmation

Nineteen (19) participants emphasized that affirming and recognizing the efforts of both students and staff regardless of how small it can have a transformative effect on school morale and performance. Encouragement that is both intentional and consistent helps individuals feel appreciated and valued for their contributions. This form of positive reinforcement motivates continued effort, builds confidence, and strengthens individual and group identity within the school community. It also plays a key role in fostering a growth mindset, where progress is seen and celebrated, not just final outcomes.

"I make sure to affirm their efforts even small ones."

"With teachers, I provide encouragement even in simple ways acknowledging their efforts during classroom observations or checking in when I know they're struggling."

"Encouragement is delivered through formal and informal channels, reinforcing accountability while recognizing effort."

4.3 Modeling Respectful Communication

Eight (8) participants conveyed that demonstrating calm, kind, and respectful communication is not just a personal trait but a leadership strategy that influences the broader school culture. When academic leaders communicate in ways that reflect patience, humility, and attentiveness, they set a behavioral standard for how interactions should take place within the institution. This modeling promotes emotional intelligence, encourages mutual respect, and helps create an atmosphere where both students and staff feel safe, respected, and motivated to engage with one another constructively.

"I perceive myself as a very kind and soft-spoken individual."

"I give attention to what is being communicated, respond appropriately, and acknowledge contributions regardless of position."

Question 5. Can you describe a situation where your positive communication influenced an inclusive decision or action within the institution?

5.1 Leading with Empathy and Understanding

Twenty (20) participants emphasized that approaching sensitive situations with empathy and emotional intelligence significantly contributes to inclusive decisions within academic institutions. Rather than enforcing top-down mandates or reacting with bias, they created space for human connection and mutual understanding recognizing personal challenges, identities, and unique learning needs. Through respectful listening and emotional awareness, these leaders not only addressed immediate concern but also transformed institutional perspectives, showing that empathy in communication can pave the

way for long-term cultural shifts and inclusive practices.

> *"Through calm dialogue and empathy, we agreed to use the student's preferred name and ensured they felt safe in the classroom."*

> *"Despite her struggles with meeting the expected physical appearance, I recognized her effort and determination."*

> *"Instead of reinforcing that view, I asked if we could look into what support might work better for that learner."*

> *"Maintaining a calm, objective, and respectful manner during sensitive matters, I was able to facilitate dialogue among involved parties."*

5.2 Promoting Inclusion through Dialogue

Twenty-one (21) participants illustrated that open, respectful dialogue plays a vital role in breaking down resistance, shifting mindsets, and enabling fair, inclusive outcomes. Creating environments where different voices and perspectives could be heard whether among teachers, applicants, or institutional partners, they helped shape decisions that were not only more equitable but also grounded in collective understanding. Their positive communication encouraged critical conversations that turned initial skepticism or hesitation into cooperation and acceptance.

> *"Instead of imposing a rule, I called for a learning session where we discussed gender sensitivity."*

> *"I asserted that that institution be included, regardless of initial disagreement with leaders… they consented."*

> *"The decisions that followed were inclusive because the process itself encouraged understanding, cooperation, and compromise."*

5.3 Recognizing Individual Worth Beyond Norms

Fourteen (14) participants described how inclusive decisions were shaped by their ability to look beyond rigid standards such as academic performance, appearance, or institutional prestige and focus instead on personal potential, character, and innovation. Their communication reflected a belief in equity over conformity, affirming that every individual or institution deserves a chance to be seen, supported, and included when their value is recognized through meaningful interaction.

> *"Although she may not excel academically as required... I recognized her effort and determination."*

> *"Simply to focus on the innovation potential of the institution… their inclusion in our Project is stable and mutually beneficial."*

Question 6. In what ways do you model inclusive behavior through your interactions and communication with the school community?

6.1 Demonstrating Unbiased Respect

Twenty-three (23) participants highlighted that inclusive leadership is best modeled through consistent, unbiased respect toward all individuals, regardless of their position or background. This communication practice reinforces the idea that every member of the school community is equally valued whether they are utility staff, faculty, students, or administrators. By avoiding discriminatory tone, speaking with empathy, and addressing issues in private rather than public

confrontation, these leaders cultivate a respectful and safe environment. Their actions show that inclusion is reflected not just in policies but in the tone, approach, and everyday treatment of people across all levels of the institution.

> *"I make sure to show equal respect to everyone, teachers, utility workers, guards, parents, and of course, our learners."*

> *"Whether I'm talking to a struggling learner, a janitor, or a fellow teacher, I treat them with the same respect."*

> *"Regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion, I actively listen to their point of view… I will respect their view."*

> *"I maintain consistency in how I engage with all members of the academic community."*

6.2 Visibility and Inclusive Engagement

Seventeen (17) participants emphasized that active presence in various student-led and non-academic events is a visible form of modeling inclusion. When school leaders make time to attend activities of diverse student groups such as special education programs, cultural events, and club activities they signal that every sector of the student population is valued. This physical engagement deepens trust and shows that inclusivity is not symbolic but lived and demonstrated. Their visibility helps create a shared space where no group feels overlooked or excluded.

> *"I show up at events that matter to different student groups, example school clubs, special education gatherings, cultural programs."*

> *"I try to be present in school events where students from different clubs and interest groups are involved."*

> *"I acknowledge different perspectives and ensure that no individual or group is excluded from institutional processes or information."*

6.3 Values-Based Assertive Communication

Ten (10) participants described how they model inclusivity by communicating respectfully while staying grounded in personal values and ethical boundaries. Rather than avoiding difficult issues or conforming to pressure, they choose to respond with honesty and integrity, even in disagreement. This form of assertive communication does not seek conflict but demonstrates that inclusivity can exist alongside principled leadership. It reflects a professional balance honoring others' views while upholding one's own, contributing to institutional stability and trust.

> *"The most effective way to lead is by setting an example. There is little need for extensive discussion; it is simply about being true to myself."*

> *"For directions that violate, I respectfully and openly disagree... I try my best to listen to everyone and honor an agreement or disagreement."*

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the strategic use of empathetic, respectful, and inclusive language by academic leaders as a relational means to foster inclusive school cultures. These language choices grounded in compassion and shared responsibility echo earlier assertions that leadership communication directly shapes institutional narratives and cultivates climates of psychological safety (Putra et al., 2025; Paulus, 2023). The intentional use of non-stigmatizing phrases such as encouraging teachers to ask, "How can we help this child?" reflects a conscious effort by academic leaders to frame

student concerns as shared responsibilities, thereby fostering an inclusive environment grounded in empathy and collective support.

Intentional messaging, as practiced by the participants, reflects a linguistic awareness that goes beyond technical correctness. It reinforces inclusive values through daily interactions that, in turn, normalize acceptance and equity (Dionne et al., 2025; Chourouk & Nour, 2024). As leaders consciously align their tone and word choices with inclusive principles, they validate diverse identities and reduce the interpersonal barriers that often hinder engagement. These practices affirm the notion that institutional inclusivity is as much a discursive process as it is a policy initiative (Okata et al., 2024).

Moreover, the adaptation of language to reflect cultural and linguistic contexts particularly among Indigenous and Muslim families demonstrates a communicative sensitivity grounded in respect for diversity. These culturally attuned practices are consistent with findings from Merza et al. (2022), who emphasize the efficacy of pakikipagkapwa in the Philippine leadership context. When leaders deliberately adjust their language for accessibility and relevance, they operationalize inclusivity not as abstract rhetoric but as lived interaction. Such alignment of verbal clarity with cultural awareness supports findings by Veliyev (2025), who advocates for localized, participatory discourse in multilingual communities.

The behavioral dimension of leadership communication was equally emphasized in the study. Participants' use of active listening, affirmations, and patient dialogue contributed to relational trust and openness, which are indispensable in inclusive institutions (Jahromi et al., 2016; Bodie et al., 2015). These communication behaviors not only enhance interpersonal dynamics but also reduce resistance and facilitate constructive feedback loops, as described by Dietl et al. (2023). Leaders' consistent use of emotionally attuned and fair communication strategies reflects the social constructionist view that language not only conveys meaning but co-constructs institutional norms.

Further reinforcing these dynamics, the study showed that communicative modeling by leaders impacts broader school culture. When administrators engage respectfully with every member of the community regardless of position or social background, they cultivate an ethos of inclusion that transcends formal announcements or mandates. Additionally, Communicative modeling sets behavioral standards for the organization and invites emulation across hierarchical levels.

Encouragingly, the visibility of leaders in student-led and marginalized group activities served as an embodiment of inclusive leadership through presence and engagement. These actions corroborate Ang'ana (2021), who argue that credibility in leadership is established through the congruence between communication and action. In addition, decisions made through dialogue, empathy, and respect for individuality such as the recognition of a student's preferred identity or an institution's unique innovation potential underscore that inclusion often emerges from relational judgment rather than rigid criteria. These examples reflect Gamage et al. (2021) observation that inclusive decision-making requires the strategic elevation of marginalized perspectives through dialogue.

Furthermore, participants' emphasis on assertive, values-based communication without compromising ethical integrity demonstrates that inclusive leadership can co-exist with principled conviction. Rather than conforming to pressure or remaining neutral on critical issues, these leaders chose to uphold inclusive

ideals through respectful yet firm dialogue, a communicative balance that sustains institutional trust (Bhatti et al., 2023). Taken together, the results affirm that inclusive leadership is not merely an administrative posture, but a communicative stance enacted through consistent, culturally grounded, emotionally responsive, and ethically sound interactions. This underscores the importance of continuous reflection and intentionality in language and behavior as foundational to achieving truly inclusive educational environments.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the language message patterns, and communicative behaviors of academic leaders are critical instruments in shaping inclusive educational environments. Rather than functioning merely as a means of information exchange, leadership communication serves as a relational and cultural force that directly impacts how inclusion is understood, practiced, and sustained within institutions. The research demonstrates that the use of empathetic, culturally attuned, and non-stigmatizing language by academic leaders contributes to a psychologically safe and emotionally supportive environment where learners and staff feel respected, valued, and empowered.

Findings further reveal that inclusive leadership is not confined to policy rhetoric but is deeply embedded in the daily interactions and behavioral modeling of school heads. Leaders who practice active listening, speak with encouragement, and engage with authenticity reinforce a culture of trust and shared responsibility. Their ability to adjust tone, vocabulary, and delivery based on context and audience reflects a high level of emotional intelligence and cultural sensitivity, particularly in settings marked by ethnic, linguistic, and social diversity. These adaptive strategies reinforce inclusion as a lived experience rather than an abstract ideal. Moreover, the presence and visibility of leaders in student-led and marginalized group activities function as symbolic and practical affirmations of inclusivity. These actions demonstrate that inclusive leadership must be consistently enacted through communication that aligns with ethical values and institutional goals. Assertive yet respectful dialogue in decision-making processes reveals that effective inclusive leadership balances empathy with conviction, ensuring that diverse voices are heard without compromising core principles.

While the study offers valuable insight, it is important to acknowledge that the findings are limited to the perspectives of a purposively selected group of academic leaders and may not fully capture the communication practices of all leadership contexts across the broader educational landscape. The qualitative design, while rich in detail, also means that the results are context-bound and not generalizable to all institutions. Future research is recommended to expand the participant base to include voices from teaching staff, students, and parents, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of how inclusive communication is perceived and experienced at different institutional levels. Additionally, longitudinal studies may help assess how sustained communicative behaviors influence institutional transformation over time.

In essence, this study affirms that inclusive education thrives not only on structural frameworks but also on the intentional and reflective use of language and behavior by academic leaders. Inclusive leadership is enacted through relational practices grounded in clarity, respect, cultural awareness, and emotional responsiveness. By sustaining these communicative commitments, academic leaders play a vital role in advancing

equity, cohesion, and dignity within educational institutions, making leadership communication a strategic pillar in the pursuit of inclusive education.

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