

BALIK-ISLAM AMONG BLAANS: CONVERSION PATHWAYS AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Asnaira P. Sarip

Mindanao State University – General Santos City

Email: asnaira.sarip@msugensan.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Religious conversion is a complex and deeply personal process shaped by cultural, economic, and social influences. This study investigates the transition of the Blaan people to Balik-Islam, focusing on the motivations behind their conversion and its impact on identity, community, and cultural practices. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study explores the nuanced factors that guide Blaan individuals in their spiritual journey, emphasizing the intersection of faith, tradition, and adaptation.

The primary objective is to analyze the process through which the Blaans embrace Balik-Islam. Religious transitions among indigenous groups often unfold gradually, influenced by historical narratives, personal experiences, and external conditions. This research identifies the pathways of conversion, highlighting the roles of religious mentors, social networks, and intercultural interactions in shaping the spiritual transformation of Blaan adherents.

In addition to the conversion process, the study examines the underlying reasons for embracing Islam. While personal conviction and spiritual fulfillment are significant motivators, broader socio-economic and cultural factors also play a role. The research assesses how religion intersects with livelihood, kinship structures, and traditional practices, and how these intersections influence the decision to convert. It also explores how Islamic beliefs reshape social dynamics within indigenous communities, particularly in terms of identity negotiation and societal expectations.

The study further addresses the challenges faced by Blaan Balik- Islam converts. Transitioning to Islam involves changes in religious practices, potential social resistance, and tensions within indigenous circles. Converts may struggle to reconcile their new faith with ancestral customs and face pressures from both their native community and the broader Muslim society. This research sheds light on these challenges and the strategies used by converts to navigate them, aiming for integration and spiritual fulfillment.

A central theme is cultural preservation. Conversion does not equate to the abandonment of indigenous identity; rather, it often leads to a redefinition of cultural expression within the framework of Islam. The study explores how Blaan converts retain elements of their heritage—such as rituals, language, and customs—while practicing their new faith. This provides a nuanced understanding of religious adaptation and its role in shaping intercultural and interfaith relationships.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on religious conversion, identity transformation, and intercultural dynamics in the Philippines. By documenting the lived experiences of Blaan Balik-Islam adherents,

it offers insights into how faith, tradition, and community coalesce to shape individual and collective identities in a multicultural society.

Keywords:

Balik-Islam, cultural preservation, indigenous identity, religious conversion, spiritual transformation

INTRODUCTION

Anywhere in the world where people live, history books have documented the impact of religion on people's lives; religion always has an effect on society. Although religion is considered an essential component of human life, it has also occasionally resulted in tragedy for individuals. Religion has been used by conquerors to subjugate other lands and establish their rule. The Spanish colonization of the Philippines had two distinct goals: to convert locals to Christianity and expand the territories under the control of the Spanish Monarch. This serves as a vivid illustration of religion's dual role as both a spiritual and political tool.

In certain instances, people willingly converted to a new religion to gain favor with the government rather than rebel and risk their lives (Stark & Finke, 2000). In 1565, the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines with the combined purpose of converting the locals to Christianity and enlarging the Spanish monarchy's imperial domains (Majul, 1976). In Luzon, the Visayas, and parts of Mindanao, they achieved these goals through force, persuasion, threats, or gifts. However, historians often depict religious conversion as a burden and a complete shift in beliefs. Baer (2014) notes that modern religious studies often portray conversion as a dramatic transformation, where "a complete division is established in the twinkling of an eye between the old life and the new" (p. 210).

Religious conversion is widely viewed as an act with social and political implications. It has long been assumed that the larger society- whether family, village, or state-has a vested interest in the matter (Beaucage, Meintel, & Mossière, 2007). In the Philippines, Islam ranks as the second-largest religious affiliation after Catholicism, with 6.4 percent of the population identifying as Muslim according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2020). Islam had been practiced in the region for centuries before the arrival of Christianity (Sitoy, 1985).

Historical records such as the Sulu Genealogy recount the missionary efforts of Karim ul-Makhdum and Rajah Baguinda, whose arrival and influence led to the establishment of the Sultanate of Sulu. The first Sultan, Sharif ul-Hashim, consolidated religious and political authority through marriage and governance, formally establishing the sultanate in 1457 (Saleeby, 1908). His leadership introduced Islamic law and fostered diplomatic ties with neighboring regions, transforming Sulu into a significant trade hub.

Despite colonial pressures, the Sultanate's cultural and religious influence endured. The Tausug people continue to uphold traditions shaped by Islamic governance. Studies show that the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia and Malaysia, occurred largely through peaceful

means-via merchants and Sufi missionaries-contrasting with the territorial conquests seen in the Middle East (Ricklefs, 2006). In the Philippines, peaceful conversion through marriage and diplomacy was also evident. The term "Balik-Islam" reflects the belief that those who embrace Islam are returning to a faith historically practiced by early settlers before colonialism (Wadi, 2004).

This study investigates the phenomenon of Balik-Islam among the Blaans of General Santos City, focusing on the socio-cultural transformations and motivations behind their religious conversion. It aims to understand how indigenous identity is negotiated within the framework of Islamic faith and how conversion impacts community dynamics and cultural preservation.

Method

This research focuses on the Blaan Balik-Islam community of General Santos City and adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing both descriptive and historical approaches. The descriptive method was employed to gather evidence about the attributes, behaviors, and experiences of a specific group-Blaan individuals who have converted to Islam. Meanwhile, the historical approach was used to collect and evaluate data from past records, reports, and observations to understand the broader context and evolution of religious conversion among indigenous groups.

Data Collection

To obtain reliable and comprehensive information, the researcher conducted guided surveys and in-depth interviews with selected Blaan Balik-Islam individuals. These interviews provided firsthand accounts of their conversion experiences, motivations, and the socio-cultural changes they encountered. Additional data were gathered through consultations with key informants from the Integrated Cultural Communities Affair Division (ICCAD-Gensan), which maintains records of Balik-Islam tribes in the city. These informants assisted in mapping the locations of Blaan Balik-Islam families and provided institutional insights into their community dynamics.

Further contributions came from representatives of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples Region XII (NCIP), the government agency responsible for policy-making and program implementation concerning indigenous rights and cultural preservation. Their perspectives

helped contextualize the institutional and governmental responses to religious conversion among indigenous peoples.

Data Source and Respondents

The primary data source for this study is the Blaan Balik-Islam community itself. Ten Blaan individuals who had undergone religious conversion served as primary respondents, regardless of gender. Their relatives and close friends also participated, offering additional context on the social dynamics surrounding conversion. Key informants from ICCAD- Gensan, including the Director and Assistant Director, provided tribal mapping and demographic data.

One elder from the Blaan tribe, also affiliated with NCIP, contributed valuable insights into cultural preservation and policy implications. Moreover, five religious professionals were consulted for their expertise, including:

A member of the Gensan Balik-Islam Organization

A propagator from the Balik-Islam Qur'anic Center for Women

The president of the Balik-Islam Missionary Centre

The Chairman of the Muslim Religious Advisory Council (MRAC)

The President of the Madaris Federation of General Santos City

These professionals offered perspectives on spiritual transformation, community integration, and religious practice.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in General Santos City, a highly urbanized area in the SOCCSKSARGEN region of Mindanao, Philippines. Known for its agricultural and coastal industries, the city comprises 26 barangays and had a population of 697,315 as of the 2020 census. Research activities were focused in seven barangays: San Jose, Batomelong, Tinagacan, Bawing, Labangal, Calumpang, and Buluan, where significant populations of Blaan Balik-Islam adherents reside.

Data Type and Analysis

The study utilized qualitative data, including narratives, observations, and institutional records. These were analyzed through thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns, themes, and categories related to religious conversion, cultural negotiation, and identity transformation. The historical data were cross-referenced with contemporary accounts to trace the evolution of Balik-Islam practices among the Blaans. This approach allowed

for a holistic understanding of the socio-cultural implications of religious conversion in an indigenous context.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The analysis is structured into three main sections: (1) the factors influencing the Blaans' conversion to Balik Islam, (2) the experiences and adjustments of Balik Islam adherents after conversion, and (3) their responses to the social, cultural, and personal changes and challenges that followed.

Community Impact

The conversion to Islam of the Blaan people in GenSan has had a profound impact on their communities. The integration of Islamic principles with their traditional cultural practices has created a unique blend of religious and cultural identity. This transformation has fostered a sense of unity and belonging among the Blaan people, promoting mutual understanding and respect within their communities.

The individuals highlighted in this profile have played significant roles in promoting Islamic teachings and supporting their communities. Their dedication to education, health services, and community building exemplifies the positive impact of the Balik-Islam movement. Through their efforts, they have helped create a harmonious and cohesive community that respects and celebrates both their cultural heritage and Islamic faith.

Challenges and Opportunities

While the conversion to Islam has brought about significant positive changes, it also presents challenges. The integration of traditional cultural practices with Islamic principles can be complex and challenging. Some members of the community may struggle to reconcile their traditional beliefs with their new faith.

Additionally, the lack of adequate resources and support for new converts can pose challenges in their spiritual journey. Ensuring access to Islamic education and religious support is crucial in helping new converts navigate their faith journey successfully.

However, the Balik-Islam movement also offers numerous opportunities. It provides a platform for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the Blaan people and the broader Muslim community. This

movement fosters a sense of unity and belonging, where diverse cultural practices can coexist and enrich the spiritual landscape of the community.

Moreover, the Balik-Islam movement empowers individuals within the Blaan community to take on leadership roles and contribute to the development of their community. Through their dedication to education, health services, and community building, these individuals play a crucial role in promoting peace, understanding, and cultural preservation.

The conversion of the Blaan people in Gensan to Islam represents a significant cultural and religious transformation. This journey towards embracing Islam, while preserving their rich cultural heritage, reflects the resilience and adaptability of the Blaan community. The integration of traditional practices with Islamic principles has created a unique blend of cultural and religious identity, enriching the spiritual landscape of the Blaan people.

The profiles of individuals within the B'laan Balik-Islam movement highlight their dedication to education, health services, community building, and spiritual guidance. Their efforts are instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging, unity, and understanding within the community.

While the Balik-Islam movement presents challenges, it also offers numerous opportunities for cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and community development. The journey of the Blaan people in GenSan towards embracing Islam is a testament to their commitment to preserving their cultural heritage while exploring new spiritual horizons. As the Balik-Islam movement continues to grow, it will undoubtedly shape the future of the Blaan community, fostering a harmonious and inclusive environment that celebrates both their cultural and religious identities.

The Blaan Balik-Islam in GenSan and Reasons for their conversion to Islam

The Blaan people, originally indigenous to Mindanao, have undergone significant cultural, economic, and social changes following their conversion to Islam, particularly in General Santos City. Historically, the Blaan were displaced when GenSan was founded in 1939, leading some to settle in the city.

Their conversion to Islam, often referred to as Balik-Islam (returning to Islam), was influenced by various factors, including intermarriage with Muslim communities, exposure to Islamic teachings through religious outreach programs, and socio-economic opportunities associated with the broader Muslim community.

Influences Towards Conversion

The personal accounts of Blaen individuals who have converted to Islam provide compelling insights into the transformative power of their faith. These stories highlight the roles of family and friends, the journey of self-discovery, and community support.

Bulliet (1979) in "Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period" highlights how communal support and acceptance are crucial for the successful integration of converts into their new religious community.

Role Models

Having role models and mentors within the community can significantly influence an individual's conversion journey, providing guidance and inspiration.

Majul (1973) in "Muslims in the Philippines" emphasizes the importance of mentors and community leaders in guiding new converts and fostering a supportive environment.

Blaen convert 1: "Sa wala pa ko nag-embrace sa Islam, permi ko nabati nga adunay kulang sa akong kinabuhi. Ang pagkahimong usa ka Madrassah teacher nagtugot kanako nga makapangita og katuyuan ug espirituwal nga katagbawan. Apan ang una nga nagpukaw sa akong interes mao ang impluwensya sa akong mga kauban nga B'laen Balik Islam. Nakita nako ang ilang kinabuhi ug ang kalinaw nga ilang nakaplagan sa ilang pagtuo, ug kini nagpadasig kanako nga mosusi usab sa Islam alang sa akong kaugalingon."

"Before embracing Islam, I always felt that something was missing in my life. Becoming a Madrasah teacher allowed me to find purpose and spiritual fulfillment. However, it was the influence of my fellow Blaen Balik Islam that initially sparked my curiosity. Observing their lives and the peace they found in their faith made me want to explore Islam for myself."

The testimony underscores the significant impact of social influence in the conversion process. The respondent notes, "It was the influence of my fellow Blaen Balik Islam that initially sparked my curiosity." This points to the role of social networks in shaping religious beliefs and practices. Observing the lives of others who had already embraced Islam and witnessing the peace and fulfillment they experienced played a crucial role in the respondent's journey.

Blaan convert 2: "Sa panahon sa akong high school, dako kaayo ang impluwensya sa akong mga Muslim nga kaklase sa akong. Tungod sa ilang impluwensya, nagsugod ko og sul-ob og hijab, ug sa kadugayan, nakamatngon ko nga ni-embrace na diay ko sa Islam."

"During my high school years, my Muslim classmates had a significant influence on me. Their impact was so strong that I started wearing a hijab and, over time, realized I had embraced Islam myself."

The respondent's exposure to Muslim classmates played a pivotal role in their conversion to Islam. The influence exerted by these peers was profound, leading to significant behavioral and lifestyle changes. The respondent states, "Their impact was so strong that I started wearing a hijab and, over time, realized I had embraced Islam myself." This testimony highlights the powerful role of social influence and peer relationships in the process of religious conversion, demonstrating how daily interactions and the visible commitment of peers can inspire a profound personal transformation.

Blaan convert 6: "Niadto sa tuig 2008, nahimo kong Muslim tungod sa Balik Islam sa among silingan. Adunay usa ka Ustadz adtong panahona-nakalimot na ko sa iyang ngalan-nga nagbahagi kanako sa konsepto sa tawhid, o ang 'kawhaan' sa Diyos. Siya ang naggiya kanako sa akong paglakaw hangtod nga nakakaplag ko sa kamatuoran. Ang uban nga B'laan Balik Islam usab nagtabang sa akong bag-ong pagtuo. Alhamdulillah!"

"Way back in 2008, I became Muslim because of the Balik Islam in our neighborhood. There was an Ustadz at that time-I can't remember his name-who shared with me the concept of tawhid, or the 'oneness' of God. He walked with me through my journey until I found my way to the truth. Other B'laan Balik Islam also supported my new faith. Alhamdulillah!"

The respondent embraced Islam influenced by the Balik Islam movement in their neighborhood, mentored by a religious teacher who emphasized the oneness of God in his teachings and supported by the peaceful and fulfilling lives of fellow Blaan Balik Islam, which motivated their conversion and integration into the Muslim community.

Blaan convert 7: "Naatol adtong panahona, dakong impluwensya ang akong silingan nga si Blaan convert 6, nga usab usa ka B'laan Balik Islam, sa akong pagbag-o sa pagtuo. Gidapit ko niya sa usa ka sesyon sa pagtuon sa Quran nga gipangulohan sa usa ka Ustadz. Kini nga pagdapit maoy pagsugod sa akong espirituwal nga paglawig. Ang mga pagtulun-an ug

paggiya nga akong nadawat niadtong mga sesyon nakaimpluwensya gayud kanako. Sa kadugayan, ni-embrace nako ang Islam, ug tungod sa dedikasyon ni Mark Joniel, nahimo usab akong propagator sa Islam. Ang uban, ingon pa nila, kasaysayan na."

"Back in the days, I was deeply influenced by my neighbor, Blaan convert 6, who was also a Blaan Balik Islam. He invited me to join a Quran study session led by an Ustadz. This invitation marked the beginning of my spiritual journey. The teachings and guidance I received during these sessions resonated with me profoundly. Over time, I embraced Islam, and inspired by Blaan convert 6 dedications, I eventually became a propagator of Islam myself. The rest, as they say, is history."

The respondent's journey to Islam shows the powerful role of personal relationships and community support in religious conversion. Influenced by his neighbor, Blaan convert 7 found a deep connection with the teachings of Islam. Over time, he embraced the faith fully and, inspired by the dedication of his mentor, became a propagator of Islam himself. This story highlights the importance of mentorship and a supportive community in spiritual growth and conversion.

Community Responses Towards Conversion

For many Blaan individuals, the decision to embrace Islam is deeply rooted in family dynamics. Families often serve as the primary unit of influence, where religious practices and beliefs are shared and passed down through generations. Here are some individual accounts that highlight the importance of family in the conversion process:

Family Influence/Acceptance

Family members often provide essential emotional support and guidance during the conversion process. This support is crucial for individuals navigating the challenges associated with adopting a new faith.

Rambo and Farhadian (2014) in their book "The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion" highlight how familial support can ease the transition and reinforce the individual's commitment to their new religion.

Blaan convert 2: "Ang among pamilya magtinabangay sa lisod nga mga panahon, naghatag og emosyonal ug pinansyal nga tabang. Nagkahiusa usab kami sa pagselebrar sa Ramadan ug uban pang mga Muslim nga piyesta ug holiday. Naglipay og nagpalig-on sa usag usa kung adunay kasakit.

"Our family supports each other during difficult times, offering both emotional and financial help. We also celebrate together during Ramadan and other Muslim festivals and holidays. We comfort one another through losses."

Blaan convert 2's conversion to Islam was influenced by her close-knit family, who were already practicing Muslims. The support from her family members allowed her to balance her duties as a homemaker and a propagator of Islam. The familial influence provided her with a solid foundation to actively participate in community events and educational programs.

Blaan convert 3: "...sukad nga nag-Balik Islam ko ug gidawat kini sa akong pamilya, nahatag kini ug lig-on nga pundasyon aron mas maayo nako buhaton akong trabaho. Karon, ginatan-aw nako ang akong trabaho ingon nga usa ka Ibadah ngadto kang Allah. Ingun usa ka health worker, sa dili pa ko moadto sa akong opisina o mag-atubang ug pasyente, naga-ampo ko ug ginaseguro nga ginabuhi nako ang Islamic nga mga prinsipyo."

"...since I became Balik Islam, and my family accepted it over time, it has strengthened my ability to do my job better. I now see my work as an act of worship to Allah. As a healthcare worker, before I go to my office or see a patient, I pray first and ensure that I live according to Islamic principles."

As a Barangay Health Worker, Blaan convert 3 family played a crucial role in her understanding of the importance of integrating cultural sensitivity with professional expertise. Her family's acceptance of her new faith enabled her to provide health services that respect local traditions, enhancing her effectiveness in her role.

Blaan convert 5: "Ingon nga Head sa Barangay Peace Community, akong misyon ang pagpasiugda sa kalinaw ug pagpreserba sa kultura nga gisuportahan sa duha nakong pamilya ug mga higala. Ang ilang kolektibong impluwensya nagtugot kanako sa paghimo og malinawon nga palibot diin ang tanan gibati nga gipangga. Ang suporta sa akong pamilya ug mga higala hinungdanon sa akong paningkamot sa pagpasiugda sa panaghiusa ug pagsabot sulod sa akong komunidad."

"As the Head of the Barangay Peace Community, my mission is to promote peace and preserve culture, supported by both my family and friends. Their collective influence allows me to create a peaceful environment where everyone feels valued. The support of my family and friends is crucial to my efforts in fostering unity and understanding within my community."

As the Head of the Barangay Peace Community, Blaen convert 5 mission to promote peace and cultural preservation is supported by both her family and friends. The testimony underscores the significance of having a strong network of supportive relationships in achieving personal and communal harmony. It's a testament to the power of collective efforts in creating positive change.

Blaen convert 8: "Ang akong papel isip usa ka community coordinator dako gayod nga gipakigmatuod sa suporta gikan sa akong pamilya ug mga higala. Ang ilang pagdasig nagtugot kanako sa pag-bridge sa mga cultural ug social gaps, nga nagpromote sa mga educational initiatives ug pagpalig-on sa kooperasyon sa komunidad. Ang gihiusa nga impluwensya sa akong pamilya ug mga higala hinungdanon sa akong paningkamot sa paghimo og mahinarmonya nga komunidad."

"My role as a community coordinator is greatly strengthened by the support of my family and friends. Their encouragement enables me to bridge cultural and social gaps, promote educational initiatives, and strengthen community cooperation. The combined influence of my family and friends is crucial to my efforts in creating a harmonious community."

Blaen convert 8's testimony underscores the critical role of family and friends in achieving personal and communal success. Their unwavering support empowers individuals to overcome cultural barriers and foster unity within their community. This support has been crucial in her journey to embrace Islam and excel professionally.

Blaen convert 9: "Ang akong dedikasyon sa pagpakaylap sa mga pagtulonan sa Islam gisuportahan sa usa ka network sa pamilya ug mga higala nga nagpaambit sa akong commitment. Ang ilang kolektibong suporta nagtugot kanako sa pag-access sa mga resources ug mga oportunidad sa economic development, sama sa funding alang sa mga proyekto sa komunidad ug vocational training programs. Ang gihiusa nga impluwensya sa pamilya ug mga higala hinungdanon sa akong paningkamot sa pagpasiugda sa lig-on nga pagbati sa pagtuo ug komunidad."

"My dedication to spreading the teachings of Islam is supported by a network of family and friends who share my commitment. Their collective support enables me to access resources and opportunities for economic development, such as funding for community projects and vocational training programs. The combined influence of my family and friends is crucial to my efforts in promoting a strong sense of faith and community."

The steadfast encouragement from the family and friends of Blaan convert 9 plays a vital role in his attempts to advance Islamic teachings and foster community growth. Their collective impact not only enhances his determination but also supplies the essential resources needed to effect significant change and nurture a robust sense of faith and community.

Blaan convert 10: "Ang akong doble nga papel isip usa ka Madrasah nga magtutudlo ug propagator gisuportahan sa akong pamilya ug mga higala. Sila naghatag libre nga pagsakay sa mga dapit nga akong adtoan para magwali sa daw'a, ug usahay sila maghatag ug pagkaon para sa akong kauban nga mga propagator. Ang ilang pagdasig ug suporta naghatag kanako sa mga kinahanglanon nga gamit aron magtudlo ug maggiya sa sunod nga henerasyon. Ang pinagsamang impluwensya sa akong pamilya ug mga higala hinungdanon kaayo sa akong mga paningkamot sa pag-amot sa espirituhanong kalamboan sa akong komunidad."

"My dual role as a Madrasah teacher and propagator is supported by my family and friends. They provide free rides to the places where I preach, and sometimes they give food for my fellow propagators. Their encouragement and support give me the resources needed to educate and guide the next generation. The combined influence of my family and friends is crucial to my efforts in contributing to the spiritual development of my community."

The robust support of Blaan convert 10's family and friends is instrumental in his success as both an educator and a community advocate. Their encouragement and assistance empower him to educate and mentor the youth, which in turn, plays a significant role in promoting spiritual development and unity within his community. The combined efforts of his support network are vital to achieving his goals and making a positive impact.

Insights:

Studies have shown that the influence of family and friends is critical in the process of religious conversion. According to research by Lofland and Stark (1965), social networks play a crucial role in converting individuals to new religious movements. Family and friends provide the emotional support and sense of belonging that are essential for individuals undergoing such significant changes. This is especially true in closely-knit communities where familial and social bonds are strong.

Social support systems, including family and friends, offer guidance, resources, and encouragement. These elements are crucial for individuals

embracing a new faith. The presence of supportive relationships can significantly affect an individual's well-being and their ability to navigate life changes (Cohen & Wills, 1985). In the context of the Blaan people, the support system helps them transition smoothly into the Muslim community, providing both emotional and practical resources.

The impact of social networks on spiritual journeys cannot be overstated. A study by Sherkat (1997) highlights that social ties to religious individuals increase the likelihood of conversion. The stories and experiences of those who have undergone similar spiritual journeys provide a road map and reassurance to new converts. For the Blaan people, the influence of their family and friends ensures that their conversion to Islam is supported and sustained by their social network.

Integrating into a new religious community requires acceptance and support from both the individual's immediate social circle and the broader community. The posits that social roles and the expectations associated with them are learned through interactions within one's social network (Biddle, 1986). In the case of the Blaan, the support from family and friends facilitates their integration into the Muslim community by providing a network of relationships that reinforce their new religious identity.

Education on Islam

Attending seminars can play a significant role in the conversion to Islam by providing individuals with the knowledge, support, and community engagement necessary for their spiritual journey.

Rambo and Farhadian (2014) in "The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion" emphasize the importance of education in the conversion process. Seminars provide a structured environment for learning about Islamic teachings, practices, and values, which can be crucial for individuals considering conversion.

Gandhi's Perspective: Mahatma Gandhi's idea of "losing oneself in the service of others" can be applied to the educational aspect of seminars, where individuals immerse themselves in learning and understanding the faith.

Blaan convert 8: "Nahimo kong B'laan Balik Islam human ko mitambong sa usa ka Islamic seminar sa among barangay nga gipangulohan sa mga Ustads. Ang mga pagtulun-an ug diskusyon atong seminar mihikap gyud sa akong kasingkasing, nga naggiya kanako sa pag-embrace sa Islam."

"I became a B'laan Balik Islam after attending an Islamic seminar in our barangay, led by several Ustads. The teachings and discussions during that seminar touched my heart deeply, guiding me to embrace Islam." The respondent's conversion to Islam was influenced by a seminar led by a local Ustadz. The teachings and discussions during the seminar resonated deeply with her, touching her heart and guiding her towards embracing Islam. This highlights the crucial role of educational and community events in providing the knowledge and emotional connection necessary for individuals to make informed spiritual decisions and embrace new faiths.

Blaan convert 10: "Sa wala pa ko nahimong usa ka propagator, nakaagi ko ug personal nga kausaban ug nibalik sa Islam. Nagsugod kini usa ka adlaw samtang naglakaw ko agi sa usa ka mosque duol sa among balay. Ang akong kuryusidad gidala ko sulod, ug sa dili madugay, nakakita ko sa akong kaugalingon nga naglingkod sa tunga sa kongregasyon, nadani sa pagpangwali sa mga ustads. Kana nga higayon nakahikap sa akong kalag, ug nagsugod kini sa usa ka landong sa espirituwal nga pagmata ug bag-ong katuyoan. Ang uban, ingon nila, kasaysayan na."

"Before I became a propagator, I went through a personal transformation and reverted to Islam. It all began one day as I was walking past a mosque close to my home. Curiosity led me inside, and before I knew it, I was sitting among the congregation, captivated by the preaching of the Ustadz. That moment touched something deep within me, setting me on a path of spiritual awakening and newfound purpose. The rest, as they say, is history."

Driven by curiosity, Blaan convert 10 explored Islam, experiencing a profound awakening through Ustadz preaching. This impactful moment led to a significant life change, transforming him into an advocate. His journey highlights the power of spiritual experiences in fostering personal growth and meaningful change.

Synthesis:

The conversion of Blaan individuals to Islam is deeply influenced by their familial and community networks. Family support plays a crucial role, offering emotional stability and practical assistance during the transition. Converts find that their faith strengthens their daily lives, whether in professional roles, community leadership, or personal spiritual growth. Their testimonies highlight the impact of strong social ties-family members provide encouragement, vocational opportunities, and religious guidance, enabling them to integrate seamlessly into their new faith. Academic studies

affirm that religious conversion is often facilitated by social networks, where a sense of belonging and shared identity reinforces commitment to the new faith.

Education also plays a pivotal role in conversion, as structured learning environments and religious seminars provide clarity and inspiration for those exploring Islam. Many converts attribute their decision to attend Islamic seminars or unexpected moments of religious awakening, such as encountering an Ustadz's preaching in a mosque. These experiences spark profound spiritual transformations, leading individuals not only to embrace Islam but also to advocate for its teachings within their communities. Scholarly insights emphasize that religious instruction fosters personal commitment and communal acceptance, further reinforcing the spiritual journey of Blaan Balik-Islam converts. Together, familial influence and religious education shape the path toward faith, creating a supportive foundation for embracing Islam.

The Reactions of the Blaan Community to Conversions to Islam

The process of religious conversion among the Blaan people to Islam has elicited a wide range of reactions within the community. These responses are influenced by various cultural, social, and emotional factors, highlighting the complexity of religious transitions (Rambo & Farhadian, 2014; Bowen, 2009).

Understanding the initial reactions of the Blaan to these conversions is crucial for gaining insights into the broader implications of such changes. This study examines the percentage distribution of respondents' reactions, providing a detailed analysis of how these conversions are perceived within the community

This research findings underscores the importance of dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect in navigating significant religious transformations.

Aggressive and Passive Rejections

Blaan convert 1: "Ang komunidad sa Blaan nitubag nga dismayado ug nasuko sa akong pagbalhin sa Islam. Gireject nila ako ug ang akong desisyon. Samtang ang uban nga miyembro sa komunidad wala nidawat sa akong kapilian, ang uban misulay sa pagpasagad niini imbis nga klarong ilhon ang kausaban."

"Blaan community reacted with disappointment and anger to my conversion to Islam. They rejected both me and my decision. While some members of the community did not accept my choice, others chose to ignore it rather than openly acknowledge the change."

In essence, it highlights the struggle and emotional turmoil experienced by the convert due to the lack of acceptance and support from their community. This situation underscores the difficulty of navigating personal beliefs and societal expectations, ultimately leading to a significant emotional and social impact on the individual.

Smith (2023) explores the concept of passive rejection, where individuals choose to ignore significant changes in others' lives, such as religious conversions. This form of rejection can be as painful as active rejection, as it denies the reality of the individual's new faith and leaves them in a state of social limbo.

As a result, the convert felt isolated and marginalized. However, this experience highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity and the need for dialogue. It presented opportunities to educate and foster understanding about Islam, aiming to bridge cultural gaps and promote respect, acceptance, and unity within the community through patience and persistent efforts.

Blaan convert 2: "Ang ubang mga tawo sa akong palibot adunay lain-laing mga reaksyon sa akong pag-convert sa Islam. Ang uban nasuko, samtang ang uban walay reaksyon o wala lang nagkomento. Kini nga lain-laing mga tubag nahimong bahin sa akong panaw, nga nagpakita kung unsa ka lain ang pamaagi sa mga tawo sa pagproseso ug pagtubag sa dagkong kausaban sa kinabuhi sa usa ka tawo."

"Some of the people around me had different reactions to my conversion to Islam. Some were angry, while others had no reaction at all or chose not to comment. These varied responses have been a part of my journey, reflecting the diverse ways people process and respond to significant changes in someone's life."

These responses reflect deep-seated cultural and religious beliefs and highlight the emotional complexity of such a significant transition. Despite the negative reactions and feelings of isolation, Glory's experience underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and the potential for fostering dialogue and understanding about Islam. Her resilience and

commitment to her faith serve as an inspiration for others facing similar challenges.

Blaan convert 4: "Pagka-convert nako sa Islam, ang komunidad nakasinati og kalisod ug nag-discourage. Dugay kaayo ang proseso sa pagdawat, ug tinuod gayud ang akong pakigbisog. Ang mga tawo sa akong palibot nagpakita og lain-laing mga reaksiyon, ug ang pipila kanila walay suporta, nga nagpakita og dugang pang hagit alang kanako sa akong espirituwal nga panaw. Bisan pa niini, nagpadayon ko uban ang kaisog ug determinasyon nga atubangon ang mga pagsulay ug magpadayon sa akong bag-ong pagtuo."

"When I converted to Islam, the community experienced difficulty and discouragement. The process of acceptance was very long, and the struggle was real. People around me showed various reactions, and some were not supportive, presenting additional challenges for me on my spiritual journey. Despite this, I continued with courage and determination to face the trials and remain steadfast in my new faith."

Blaan convert 4 faced significant challenges and discouragement from her community after converting to Islam. She encountered hurtful remarks from neighbors, such as, "Muslim, Muslim, but you don't even know how to speak Maguindanaon," and "Your husband will marry more wives now." The acceptance process was long and difficult, with many people reacting negatively. This lack of support made her spiritual journey even more challenging, highlighting the struggles she faced in finding acceptance and understanding.

Despite these obstacles, Blaan convert 4 remained determined and courageous. She continued to pursue her new faith with resilience and strength. Her experience underscores the emotional and social hurdles that can accompany such a significant life change, emphasizing the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity.

Johnson (2024) examines the emotional and social challenges that individuals face during significant life changes, highlighting the importance of perseverance in overcoming adversity. The research underscores how personal experiences can shape one's ability to navigate and adapt to transformative events.

Blaan convert 8: "Gisinaut nga nadawat ka sa akong kaugalingong pamilya sa verbal nga paagi, pero samtang nagpadayon ang panahon, gidawat ra gihapon nila ko. Lisud kaayo ang maagi anang kasinatian. Ang pagsinati

ug makapasakit nga mga pulong gikan sa mga tawo nga akong gihigugma ug gisaligan mao'y lisud kaayo. Pero sa kadugayan, nagsugod ra usab ang mga butang nga mausab. Sa pagka mapailubon ug pagka pagsabot, nasabtan sa akong pamilya kung kinsa gyud ko ug ilang gidawat ra gihapon ko. Dili sayon nga panaw, pero nagtuo ko nga kini nakapalig-on ug nakapalig-on sa among relasyon. Karun, naa mi sa mas maayong kahimtang, ug gibati ko ang labi pa nga pagdawat ug gugma gikan nila kaysa kaniadto".

"I was discriminated against by my own family verbally, but along the way, they accepted me. Going through that experience was incredibly tough. Hearing hurtful words from the people I loved and trusted was painful. But over time, things started to change. With patience and understanding, my family began to see me for who I truly am and they started to accept me. It wasn't an easy journey, but I think it made us all stronger and closer in the end. Now, we are in a much better place, and I feel more accepted and loved by them than ever before".

Blaan convert 8 experience highlights the transformative power of patience and understanding in overcoming discrimination. It underscores the importance of resilience and open communication in fostering acceptance and strengthening relationships. This narrative serves as a testament to the possibility of positive change even in the face of initial adversity.

Acceptance and Understanding

Blaan convert 3: "Pagkahuman nako nga niconvert sa Islam, nakasinati ko ug usa ka malipayong ug inclusive nga komunidad. Ang mga tawo sa akong palibot midawat kanako nga walay diskriminasyon, girespeto ug gipasabot nila ang akong desisyon. Ang kini nga pagdawat nagtugot kanako nga maka- integrate nga hapsay sa komunidad ug magpadayon sa akong espirituwal nga panaw uban ang suporta ug pagdasig. Ang akong kasinatian nagpakita sa positibong epekto sa usa ka mapinanggaon ug open-minded nga komunidad nga naghatag ug bili sa diversity ug nagpromote sa pagkahiusa." "After my conversion to Islam, I experienced a welcoming and inclusive community. The people around me accepted me without any discrimination, embracing my decision with respect and understanding. This acceptance allowed me to integrate smoothly into the community and continue my spiritual journey with support and encouragement. My experience highlights the positive impact of a compassionate and open-minded community that values diversity and promotes unity."

Blaan convert 3 experienced a welcoming and supportive environment within her non-convert Blaan community, particularly through Balik Islam organizations in General Santos City. Their acceptance allowed her to integrate smoothly into the community, making her transition to Islam easier and more meaningful. The encouragement she received helped her continue her spiritual journey with confidence. Her experience highlights how inclusivity and understanding can foster unity, strengthen faith, and create a harmonious community.

Blaan convert 5: "Ingon nga pangulo sa Barangay Peace Community, diin kadaghanan mga B'laan, nag-sugod ang akong panaw uban sa mga hagit. Sa sinugdan, lisod nga madawat sa akong mga kauban tungod sa among kalainan sa kultura. Apan, sa paglabay sa panahon, gidawat ug gitahud ako sa akong mga kauban nga mga barangay officer sa akong pagkaako. Kini nga pagdawat nagtugot kanako nga magpuyo ug malinawon nga kinabuhi sumala sa mga prinsipyo sa Islam.

"As the head of the Barangay Peace Community, where the majority are B'laan, my journey began with challenges. Initially, it was difficult to gain acceptance from my colleagues due to our cultural differences. However, over time, my fellow barangay officers came to accept and respect me as I am. This acceptance has allowed me to live a peaceful life in accordance with Islamic principles."

Blaan convert 8: "Ingon usa ka community worker sa DSWD office, ang akong pagbiyahe isip usa ka convert positibo kaayo. Sa una nga nasayran sa akong mga kauban sa trabaho nga ni-convert ako sa Islam, kadaghanan kanila mihagkan kanako ug nagpadayon nga miila kanako isip usa ka kauban. Kini nga pagdawat nagtugot kanako nga tan-awon ang akong trabaho isip usa ka akto sa Ibadah (pagsimba) kang Allah, nga naghatag ug mas lawom nga pagbati sa katuyoan sa akong professional nga mga responsibilidad.

Sa mga panahon nga miagi, ang akong boss nag-ila sa akong mga paningkamot ug giila ang akong kugihan nga trabaho, nga maayo kaayo nga motivasyon. Kini nga pag-ila nagpalig-on sa nga ang akong workplace nagpadayon nga suportado ug madawat, bisan pa sa akong pag-convert. Naghatag kini kanako ug dakong kalipay nga masayran nga ang akong mga kontribusyon gipalipay ug nga ang akong pagtuo wala nakababag sa akong mga professional nga relasyon o mga oportunidad."

"As a community worker in the DSWD office, my journey as a convert has been quite positive. When my colleagues first learned about my conversion to Islam, most of them embraced me and continued to acknowledge me as

their colleague. This acceptance has allowed me to view my work as an act of Ibadah (worship) to Allah, infusing my professional responsibilities with a deeper sense of purpose.

From time to time, my boss affirms my efforts and acknowledges my hard work, which is incredibly motivating. This recognition reinforces that my workplace remains supportive and welcoming, even after my conversion. It brings me great joy to know that my contributions are valued and that my faith does not hinder my professional relationships or opportunities".

Blaan convert 9: "Ang akong pamilya nidawat ug gisuportahan ang akong desisyon. Ilang girespeto ug gisuportahan unsa ang akong gipili, ug kini nakapabati kanako nga adunay bili ug sabot. Ang ilang pagdawat nakapalig- on sa among relasyon ug naghatag kanako og kumpyansa nga magpadayon, nga adunay ilang walay pagduha-duhang suporta ug gugma."

"My family has welcomed me and accepted my decision. They respect and support what I have decided, which makes me feel valued and understood. Their acceptance has strengthened our bond and given me the confidence to move forward knowing that I have their unwavering support and love."

Blaan convert 9 experienced a significant journey with his family regarding his personal decisions. Initially, his family might have been uncertain or hesitant about his choices. However, over time, they welcomed him and accepted his decision. This acceptance was not just passive; they actively respected and supported his choices.

Blaan convert 9 experience exemplifies how families can evolve in their understanding and support of their members' decisions. It underscores the importance of patience, open dialogue, and mutual respect in fostering strong, supportive family relationships.

The Cultural, Economic, and Social Changes in the lives of Blaan converts
Adopting a new faith often leads to significant transformations in various areas of life. For the Blaan community who adopted Islam, this change brought about important cultural, economic, and social shifts. In terms of culture, they began to weave Islamic customs and traditions into their everyday lives, impacting everything from what they eat to how they conduct communal rituals. On the economic front, conversion sometimes created access to fresh opportunities and resources within the broader Muslim community, which could influence their jobs and economic positions. Socially, their identities and community interactions evolved, resulting in the formation of new relationships and social networks. This complex transformation illustrates the profound and

lasting effects that embracing a new religion can have on the way of life for the Blaan people Cultural Changes

The cultural environment of the Blaan people in General Santos City (GenSan) has experienced considerable changes following their adoption of Islam. This shift has led to a fusion of traditional Blaan customs with Islamic practices, producing a distinctive cultural evolution. The Blaan have integrated new religious rituals and dietary regulations into their daily existence while still preserving certain elements of their indigenous heritage. This combination has influenced not only their spiritual beliefs but also their social norms, communal interactions, and their identity as a group. The blending of these cultures demonstrates the flexible and dynamic nature of the Blaan community in response to religious and societal changes.

When asked if they still believe in Blaan superstitious beliefs, all respondents indicated that they no longer hold any such beliefs. They have fully moved away from traditional practices and rituals associated with their former beliefs. Specifically, they no longer engage in rituals for planting rice, ceremonies related to childbirth, or any traditional educational practices rooted in superstitions.

This collective shift highlights a significant cultural and personal transformation, showcasing their commitment to new belief systems and practices. By letting go of these superstitions, they have embraced new perspectives and values that align more closely with their current understanding and spiritual journeys.

When asked if they still believe in Blaan superstitious beliefs, all respondents indicated that they no longer hold any such beliefs. Instead, they now fully practice Islamic rituals and principles. Here are the specific responses; Praying five times a day, Fasting during Ramadan, Avoiding Haram, Attending Islamic Lectures, and Giving Charity to the needy.

This comprehensive shift highlights their complete dedication to Islamic practices and a significant departure from their previous beliefs and traditions. It underscores their commitment to their new faith and the practices that come with it, reflecting a thorough integration of Islamic teachings into their daily lives.

Islamic Modesty, Dressing and Aqidah

The narratives shared by the Blaan converts reveal a profound commitment to Islamic teachings and principles, with a particular emphasis on modesty, dressing, and Aqidah (the core of Islamic creed). These individuals have embraced Islam not just as a religion but as a comprehensive way of life that influences their daily routines, interactions, and personal identity.

The converts consistently highlight the importance of modesty in both appearance and actions. This reflects a deep understanding and respect for Islamic values, which prioritize humility and simplicity. By adopting modest dressing and behavior, the converts not only adhere to religious guidelines but also express their devotion to their faith.

The focus on Aqidah underscores the significance of foundational beliefs in Islam. The converts' interest in understanding and practicing these principles indicates a strong desire to align their lives with the core tenets of their new faith. This dedication to Aqidah helps them build a solid spiritual foundation and strengthens their religious identity.

Blaan convert 1: "Nagfocus ko sa Islamic nga paagi sa pagsul-ob ug sa Aqida, ang pundasyon sa Islamikong pagtuo. Ang akong interes naa sa pagsabot ug pagpamalando sa mga prinsipyo sa pagtuo ug pagtulon-an sa Islam, ingon man sa pagpasabot sa tradisyonal ug mahugaw nga paagi sa pagsul-ob nga nagpakita sa atong relihiyosong mga bili."

"I focus on the Islamic way of dressing and Aqida, which is the core of Islamic creed. My interest lies in understanding and practicing the principles of faith and belief in Islam, as well as promoting the traditional and modest ways of dressing that reflect our religious values."

Blaan convert 2: "Gisentro nako ang pagkamahugaw sa tanang aspeto sa kinabuhi, labi na sa pagsul-ob ug pag-ampo. Ang akong tuyo mao ang pagsiguro nga ang akong paagi sa pagsul-ob magkatugma sa mga tudlo sa Islam mahitungod sa pagkamahugaw, ug nagpaningkamot ako sa pag-ampo nga mapalandungon ug magpahayag sa akong pagtuo. Nagtuo ko nga ang pagpabilin nga mahugaw sa hitsura ug lihok mao'y kritikal sa pagkinabuhi nga deboto."

"I emphasize modesty in all aspects of life, particularly in dressing and worship. My aim is to ensure that my way of dressing aligns with Islamic teachings on modesty, and I strive to worship in a manner that is respectful and reflective of my faith. I believe that maintaining modesty in both appearance and actions is crucial to living a devout life."

Blaan convert 4: "Ang akong mga focus areas mao ang pagkamahugaw, pagsul-ob, ug ang paagi sa pag-ampo sa moske. Dedikado ko sa pagpadayon sa pagkamahugaw sa akong kaugalingon, pagsunod sa mga giya sa pagsul-ob nga gihatag sa Islam. Dugang pa, nagahatag ko ug espesyal nga pagtagad sa paagi sa akong pag-ampo sulod sa moske, pagsiguro nga kini mosunod sa mga ritwal nga relihiyoso ug nagpalig-on sa akong espirituhanon nga koneksyon."

"My focus areas are modesty, dressing, and the way of worship in the mosque. I am dedicated to upholding modesty in how I present myself, following the guidelines of dressing prescribed by Islam. Additionally, I pay

special attention to the manner in which I conduct my worship within the mosque, ensuring that it adheres to religious practices and enhances my spiritual connection."

Blaan convert 9 : "Kami nagkomit sa pagsunod sa mga paagi sa Islam sa tanang aspeto sa among kinabuhi, lakip na ang among pagsul-ob ug pagsimba. Ang among bisti nagpakita sa mga prinsipyo sa Islam nga kahinlo, ug ang among mga praktis sa pagsimba mahigpit nga nagsunod sa mga pagtulon-an sa Islam. Kini nga bug-os nga pagdawat sa mga paagi sa Islam nagsiguro nga nagkinabuhi kami sa paagi nga tinuod sa among pagtuo, nga nagpalig-on sa espirituhanong disiplina ug hilabihang koneksyon sa among komunidad."

"We committed to following Islamic ways in every aspect of our lives, including our dressing and worship. Our attire reflects Islamic principles of modesty, and our worship practices are in strict accordance with Islamic teachings. This comprehensive adoption of Islamic ways ensures that we live our lives in a manner that is true to our faith, fostering strong spiritual discipline and a deep connection to our community".

Avoiding Pork

Avoiding pork is a significant aspect of adhering to Islamic dietary laws. The decision to exclude pork from their diet symbolizes the converts' willingness to conform to the religious guidelines set by Islam. This change signifies their deep commitment to their faith and their dedication to living in accordance with Islamic principles. By rejecting pork and other forbidden foods, they demonstrate their respect for and obedience to the dietary restrictions outlined in Islam.

Blaan Convert 7: "Gidawat ko ang mga praktis sa Islam bug-os nga kasingkasing. Wala na ko magkaon og baboy, ug ang akong pagsimba lahos na lamang kang Allah, nga nag-reject sa tanang uban pang mga diyos. Kini nga kausaban sa akong estilo sa kinabuhi ug mga pagtuo nagpakita sa akong bug-os nga dedikasyon sa mga pagtulon-an sa Islam, nga nagsiguro nga ang akong mga binuhatan ug pagkaon musunod sa mga giya nga relihiyoso."

"I have embraced Islamic practices wholeheartedly. I no longer consume pork, and my worship is dedicated exclusively to Allah, rejecting all other gods. This transformation in my lifestyle and beliefs signifies my complete devotion to Islamic teachings, ensuring that my actions and diet adhere to religious guidelines."

Social Practices after Conversion

Religious conversion extends beyond personal transformation, influencing an individual's social interactions, community participation, and daily

routines. For Blaan Balik-Islam converts, embracing Islam reshapes their relationships while integrating new faith-based practices. Studies highlight that social adaptation following conversion involves both religious and cultural negotiation (Rambo & Farhadian, 2014). Converts engage in communal prayers, Islamic celebrations, and faith-based gatherings while maintaining ties with their non-Muslim relatives and peers (Sherkat, 1997). This dynamic process underscores the interplay between spiritual commitment and social cohesion, revealing how individuals balance faith, identity, and societal expectations post-conversion (Lofland & Stark, 1965).

Giving Da'wah to Non-Muslim

Da'wah, the act of inviting others to explore Islam, is a core element of Muslim practice. Actively engaging in Da'wah demonstrates a dedication to spreading the faith and sharing its teachings with others. This involvement fosters deeper understanding of Islam, builds connections among diverse religious communities, and promotes inclusivity (Rambo & Farhadian, 2014; Sherkat, 1997).

Blaan convert 6: "Ang among grupo sa Balik Islam organisasyon adunay regular nga iskedyul sa Da'wah sa Plaza Heneral, diin ang among mga magwawali nagpaambit sa Quran ug nagahatag og mga pagpamatuod.

"Our team in the Balik Islam organization has a regular Da'wah schedule at Plaza Heneral, where our speakers share the Quran and give testimonies."

Blaan convert 7: "Kauban ko ni Blaan convert 6 sa kini nga buhat, apan lain among gilain nga lugar. Giatangan ko sa Mega Market sa General Santos City, diin akong gihimo ang Da'wah uban sa akong grupo, nagpaambit sa mga pagtudlo sa Islam sa mga tawo nga naa sa merkado."

"I am working alongside Blaan convert 6 in this mission, but we have different assigned areas. I was assigned to Mega Market in General Santos City, where I carry out Da'wah with my team, sharing Islamic teachings with the people in the market."

Supporting the Islamic Center

Respondents actively support the Islamic Center, recognizing its crucial role in fostering religious, educational, and social connections within the community. As a central hub, it provides a space for worship, Islamic learning, and communal gatherings, strengthening bonds among members. Through contributions, volunteer efforts, and engagement in faith-based activities, individuals ensure the center's continued operation and relevance. Their unwavering commitment underscores the importance of

preserving and nurturing this institution, reinforcing a shared cultural and spiritual identity while promoting unity and collective growth.

Blaan convert 1: "Sukad sa akong pagbalik-Islam, kanunay akong gipasabot sa Ustadz nga suportahan ang Islamic center, nga nagahatag ug tabang sa Muslim minority sa maong lugar. Ang pagbahin sa usa ka bahin sa akong kita usa ka dakong tabang sa pagtuman sa katuyuan sa Islamic center ug sa paghatag og suporta sa mga nanginahanglan"

"Since converting to Islam, I have been consistently reminded by the Ustadz to support the Islamic center, which is dedicated to assisting the Muslim minority in the area. Contributing a portion of my income helps fulfill the center's mission and provides meaningful support to those in need." Blaan convert 3: "Adunay Islamic center sa among lugar, ug matag bulan akong gihatagan ug bahin sa akong sweldo aron masuportahan ang ilang operasyon."

"There is an Islamic center in our area, and I contribute a portion of my salary every month to support its operations."

Blaan convert 8: "Gitudloan ko sa mga misyonaryo sa kahinungdanon sa pagsuporta sa mga Islamic center, ug akong gidawat kini nga buhat. Ingon nga trabahante sa DSWD, kusang-loob kong nagahatag ug bahin sa akong sweldo, bisan unsa kadak-a, tungod kay akong gilangtaw ang pagsuporta sa Islamic center isip usa ka pribilehiyo."

"Missionaries taught me the importance of supporting Islamic centers, and I have embraced this practice. As a DSWD worker, I willingly contribute a portion of my salary, regardless of the amount, because I consider supporting the Islamic center a privilege."

Supporting the Maintenance of Masjid and Madrasah

Several respondents actively contribute to the upkeep of Masjids (mosques) and Madrasahs (Islamic schools), recognizing their essential role in religious and educational life. Their support highlights the significance of maintaining these institutions to ensure a conducive environment for worship and learning. This dedication reflects the community's deep commitment to their faith and the education of future generations.

Blaan convert 5: "Pagkahibalo nako sa kamatuoran, nasabtan ko nga adunay usab ko obligasyon sa paghatag. Isip bahin sa akong mga panalangin, kusang-loob akong nagpaambit aron masuportahan ang pagmintinar sa Masjid ug Madrassa sa among lugar."

"After discovering the truth, I realized that I have a responsibility to give. As part of my blessings, I willingly share to support the maintenance of the Masjid and Madrassa in our area."

Blaan convert 9: " Sukad sa akong pagbalik-Islam, naghatag na ko og suporta sa pagmintinar sa among Masjid ug Madrassa, gawas pa sa akong papel isip propagator. Ang uban sa mga gasa nga akong madawat gikan sa mga tawo, akong ginauli isip suporta sa maong mga institusyon, tungod kay nasabtan ko nga sila nagkinahanglan og padayon nga pagpangandam tungod kay wala sila'y lig-on nga pondo alang niini."

"Since my conversion, I have been contributing to the maintenance of our Masjid and Madrassa, in addition to my role as a propagator. Some of the gifts I receive from others, I give back to support these institutions because I understand their need for continuous upkeep, as they do not have a stable funding source."

Conducting Seminars

The respondents actively engage in organizing seminars, demonstrating a strong commitment to educational and informational initiatives within their community. These seminars cover a broad range of topics, from spiritual teachings to societal issues, providing a platform for meaningful discussions and knowledge-sharing. By participating in these events, individuals contribute to collective learning, strengthen community bonds, and promote continuous personal and intellectual growth. Their involvement underscores a shared dedication to fostering awareness, enriching perspectives, and ensuring that both religious and social knowledge remain accessible and relevant.

Blaan convert 2: "Gihatagan ako og hiyas sa pagpamulong, mao nga nag-organisar ko og Islamic seminar kaduha sa usa ka bulan sa among lugar, nga naghatag espesyal nga pagtagad sa mga kababayan-an."

"I have been blessed with the gift of public speaking, which is why I hold Islamic seminars twice a month in our community, focusing especially on empowering women."

Blaan convert 9: "Usa sa akong saad kang Allah mao ang pag-organisar og seminar sa Islamic Education, nga maghisgot sa kasaysayan sa mga Propeta, labi na alang sa mga tin-edyer sa among komunidad."

"One of my commitments to Allah is to organize seminars on Islamic education, focusing on topics such as the history of the Prophets, especially for teenagers in our community."

Blaan convert 10: "Gihatagan ako og higayon nga mahimong kabahin sa usa ka organisasyon nga nagpatigayon og regular nga Islamic seminar, labi na sa panahon sa Ramadan ug ubang espesyal nga Muslim nga selebrasyon. Mapasalamaton ko nga usahay ako ang usa sa mga tigpamulong."

"I was given the opportunity to be part of an organization that conducts regular Islamic seminars, especially during Ramadan and other significant Muslim holidays. I feel blessed that I sometimes have the chance to be a speaker."

Teaching Madrassa for Free

Teaching at Madrassa without compensation exemplifies a strong sense of volunteerism and a deep commitment to education, ensuring that both religious and academic learning remain accessible to all, regardless of financial limitations. This selfless dedication fosters an inclusive environment where knowledge is shared freely, allowing young learners to develop spiritually and intellectually. By prioritizing education over personal gain, the community demonstrates its unwavering commitment to cultivating a well-informed and devoted future generation, reinforcing the values of generosity, service, and lifelong learning.

Blaan convert 1: "Bisan pa nga ang gobyerno naghatag kanamo ug allowance alang sa pagtudlo sa madrassa, usahay akong ginauli kini sa administrasyon sa madrassa. Mao nga dili ko mangayo og bayad sa akong pagtudlo. Usahay, kung maghatag sila og allowance kanako, akong ginauli kini sa administrasyon ug magpadayon sa pagtudlo nga walay bayad, kay kini naghatag kanako og kalipay."

"Although the government provides us with an allowance for teaching in the madrassa, I sometimes choose to give it back to the madrassa administration. That is why I never ask for any payment for my teaching. Occasionally, when they do give me an allowance, I return it to the administration and continue teaching for free, as it brings me happiness."

Blaan convert 2: "Matag Sabado, kung dili ako busy, nagboluntaryo ko sa pagtudlo sa mga bata sa Madrassa nga walay bayad, tungod kay kini naghatag kanako og kalipay."

"Every Saturday, when I am not busy, I volunteer to teach young children in the Madrassa for free because it brings me happiness."

Conducting Halaqah

Halaqah, or study circles, provide a structured space for reading and discussing the Qur'an alongside other Islamic literature, allowing participants to deepen their understanding of their faith. These gatherings serve as a collaborative effort to strengthen religious knowledge while

reinforcing unity within the community. Through meaningful discussions, halaqahs encourage spiritual growth, critical reflection, and the exchange of insights, fostering a sense of connection and shared purpose among attendees. By engaging in these study circles, individuals cultivate a deeper awareness of their beliefs and build lasting relationships grounded in faith and collective learning.

Blaan convert 4: "Ang pagtudlo sa Madrassah usa ka kaayo nga makatagbaw nga kasinatian. Ang Islam naghatag kanako og usa ka balangkas sa pagsabot sa kalibutan ug sa akong lugar niini. Pinaagi sa pag-edukar sa sunod nga henerasyon bahin sa mga Islamic nga bili, gibati nako nga nagkontribusyon ko sa espirituwal nga pagtubo sa akong komunidad."

"Teaching at the Madrasah has been a deeply fulfilling experience. Islam gave me a framework for understanding the world and my place in it. By educating the next generation about Islamic values, I feel I am contributing to the spiritual growth of my community."

Socio-Cultural Changes

Religious conversion from native beliefs to Islam entails significant socio-cultural shifts that affect both individuals and their communities. This transition not only changes religious rituals but also transforms social dynamics, cultural values, and personal identities. Grasping the socio-cultural dimensions of such conversions is essential for understanding the wider effects on indigenous communities and their adjustments to new religious frameworks. Conversion from native beliefs to Islam frequently results in a change in personal and collective identity. Converts embrace new religious customs, symbols, and perspectives, which can foster a sense of belonging to a broader religious group. Research has indicated that this shift in identity can be both empowering and difficult, as individuals contend with the struggle between their indigenous heritage and their new religious identity (Rambo, 1993).

Dress Code

Adhering to the Islamic dress code reflects a significant cultural and spiritual transformation, symbolizing a deepened religious identity and commitment. For women, this often means wearing the hijab and modest attire, while men may opt for traditional clothing during prayers and religious gatherings. This shift in dress not only fosters a sense of belonging and unity within the Muslim community but also serves as an outward expression of faith. However, it may also bring challenges in navigating relationships with non-Muslim family members and engaging with the broader society, requiring patience, understanding, and meaningful dialogue to bridge cultural and religious differences.

Blaan convert 1: "Pagkahibalo nako sa Usa nga nagapadayon sa kamatuoran, karon nagbisti ako sumala sa angay alang sa usa ka Muslimah."

"After coming to know the One who holds the truth, I now dress in the manner that a Muslim woman should."

Blaan convert 2: "Tungod sa tabang sa akong mga magtutudlo, nasabtan ko ang kahinungdanon sa pagsul-ob sa hijab ug pagpili sa mahinhong sinina."

"Through the guidance of my mentors, I have come to understand the significance of wearing the hijab and embracing modest dressing."

Blaan convert 3: "Karon nagsul-ob na ako sa sinina nga gisugo alang sa mga Muslimah, sumala sa gisulti sa Quran."

"I now wear the attire prescribed for Muslim women, following what is stated in the Quran."

Blaan convert 5: "Dili na ako nagsul-ob og sinina nga wala'y manggas; sa karon, nagsul-ob na ako og hijab ug mahinhong nga sinina."

"I no longer wear sleeveless clothing; instead, I now wear a hijab and dress modestly."

Communication Style

Respondents have adapted their communication styles to align with Islamic cultural values, emphasizing respect, integrity, and mindfulness in their interactions. This transformation includes using polite and considerate language, avoiding gossip, slander, and harmful speech, and integrating religious expressions such as "Insha'Allah" (God willing) and "Alhamdulillah"

(Praise be to God) into conversations. By embracing these principles, they cultivate a communication approach that reflects Islamic teachings on morality and ethics, reinforcing a culture of mutual respect, sincerity, and spiritual awareness. This shift not only enhances personal interactions but also strengthens communal bonds, fostering an environment where words are used purposefully to uplift, inspire, and promote harmony.

Blaan convert 1: "Kung makadawat ako og gasa gikan sa uban, kanunay akong mag-ingon og 'Alhamdulillah' isip pagpahayag sa akong pagpasalamat sa panalangin."

"When I receive a gift from someone, I always say 'Alhamdulillah' as a way of expressing gratitude for the blessing."

Blaan convert 2: "Oo, akong ginagamit ang pulong 'Insha'Allah' kay wala kita makabalo sa umaabot. Gigamit ko usab ang 'Baraka' aron pagpanalangin sa uban, kay kini mga makahulugang pulong sa Arabic."

"Yes, I use the word 'Insha'Allah' because we cannot predict the future. I also use terms like 'Baraka' to bless others, as these are meaningful Arabic expressions."

Blaan convert 6: "Alhamdulillah' nagpasabot og 'Dalaygon si Allah,' ug akong ginagamit kini dili lang sa maayong panahon kundi usab sa mga hagit sa kinabuhì, nagila nga ang matag panghitabo-maayo man o dautan-bahin sa iyang maalamon nga plano."

"'Alhamdulillah' means 'Praise to Allah,' and I say it not only in times of joy but also during hardships, acknowledging that every moment-whether good or bad-is part of His divine wisdom."

Blaan convert 7: "Gigamit ko ang mga pulong sa Arabic sa akong pagpamulong, lakip na ang 'Alhamdulillah' ug 'Insha'Allah,' aron mapalalom ang mensahe ug ipahayag ang pagpasalamat ug pagsalig kang Allah."

"I incorporate Arabic words into my preaching, including 'Alhamdulillah' and 'Insha'Allah,' to enrich my message and express gratitude and reliance on Allah."

Blaan convert 9: "Para kanako, importante ang paggamit sa mga pulong sa Arabic, ug akong gigamit kini matag adlaw kon kinahanglan."

"For me, using Arabic words is essential, and I incorporate them into my daily conversations whenever needed."

Blaan convert 10: "Isip propagator, ang paggamit sa mga pulong sa Arabic makatabang ug gikinahanglan, kay ang Arabic giisip nga sinultian sa langitnong kapahayagan."

"As a propagator, using Arabic words is both helpful and necessary, as Arabic is considered the language of divine revelation."

Family Structures

The journey of Blaan converts into Islam has brought profound changes to their family dynamics, shaping their relationships based on Islamic principles. Their testimonies highlight a deepened sense of duty, where mothers strive to instill religious values in their children, fathers uphold their roles as providers, and spouses embrace the concept of mutual respect and submission in marriage. This transformation fosters a strengthened commitment to love, fairness, and responsibility within the household. However, for many, the shift is not without challenges, especially in reconciling Islamic teachings with their previous familial and cultural

experiences. Despite these adjustments, their faith serves as a guiding force, helping them navigate their obligations with wisdom and balance, ensuring that their families remain rooted in love, unity, and divine guidance.

Blaan convert 1: "Isip usa ka inahan nga Muslimah, akong ginapangamuyo nga ipatuman ang tanan nga akong nahibal-an gikan sa mga seminar. Isip asawa, akong gipalalom ang akong pagpasakop sa akong bana, ug isip inahan, akong ginatuman ang akong katungdanan sa pagtudlo sa akong mga anak sa mga hiyas sa Islam, aron masiguro nga sila motubo nga may giya ug kahibalo alang sa ilang pagtuo."

"As a Muslim mother, I strive to apply everything I have learned from seminars. As a wife, I deepen my commitment to submitting to my husband, and as a mother, I recognize my responsibility to teach my children Islamic values, ensuring they grow with the guidance and knowledge necessary for their faith."

Blaan convert 2: "Pinaagi sa mga pagtulon-an sa among Ustadz, akong nahibal-an nga ang paghigugma sa akong pamilya ang labing mahinungdanon. Nasabtan ko usab nga ang bana may katungdanan sa pagpangita og pagkaon alang sa pamilya, samtang isip asawa, ang akong papel mao ang pag-atiman ug pag-amuma sa among mga anak nga may gugma ug giya nga walay paglubad."

"Through the teachings of our Ustadz, I have learned that loving my family should be my highest priority. I also understand that it is the husband's responsibility to provide for the family, while as a wife, I must nurture and care for our children, offering them unconditional love and guidance."

Blaan convert 4: "Nagdako ako sa usa ka pamilya nga adunay 13 ka magsoon, ug nabati ko nga kulang ang gugma ug pagtagad gikan sa akong mga ginikanan. Apan karon nga usa ako ka inahan sa tulo ka anak ug usa ka matinud-anon nga Muslimah, gidawat ko ang akong katungdanan nga higugmaon ang akong pamilya ug tratuhon sila nga patas. Ang akong bana usab nagahimo og maayo sa pagbuhi sa among pamilya. MashaAllah, sa kaalam ug giya nga nagtabang kanamo sa pagdumala sa among pamilya nga may pag-atiman ug balanse."

"Growing up in a family with 13 siblings, I felt deprived of the love and attention from my parents. However, now that I am a mother of three and a devoted Muslim, I embrace my duty to love my family wholeheartedly and treat them with fairness. My husband is also doing an excellent job

providing for us. MashaAllah, for the wisdom and guidance that help us manage our family with care and balance."

Blaan convert 10: "Isip usa ka amahan, mapanabot ako sa pagtratar sa akong asawa ug mga anak sumala sa mga prinsipyo sa Islam. Wala ako'y pinalabi sa akong mga anak, kay akong gihigugma silang tanan nga patas ug walay kondisyon."

"As a father, I am mindful of treating my wife and children according to Islamic principles. I do not show favoritism among my children, as I love each of them equally and unconditionally."

Food and Cuisine

Every participant follows Islamic dietary regulations, indicating a complete transformation in their food habits. This involves consuming halal meals and steering clear of haram (forbidden) foods such as pork and alcohol. This shift affects their everyday lives by altering their food selections, cooking practices, and even social engagements, as they strive to uphold their dietary restrictions in various environments.

Blaan convert 5: "Sukad nga nahimo akong Muslim, dili na ako mokaon og bisan unsang haram, lakip na ang baboy. Maayo kaayo akong pagbantay sa akong ginakaon, labi na kung kaon ko sa gawas."

"Since becoming Muslim, I have completely stopped eating anything haram, including pork. I am very careful about the food I consume, especially when eating outside."

Blaan convert 6: "MashaAllah, tungod kay ang Qur'an nagtudlo kanako sa kaimportante sa pagkaon nga limpyo ug halal, dili na ako mokaon og haram nga pagkaon. Maayo kaayo akong pagbantay sa akong ginakaon."

"MashaAllah, because the Qur'an has taught me the importance of consuming pure and permissible food, I no longer eat haram food. I am very careful with everything I eat."

Blaan convert 7: "Sa wala pa ako mahimong Muslim, akong nabatasan ang pag-inom. Apan sa akong pagkahibalo sa kamatuoran, hinay-hinay nga nawala ang akong bisyo sa pag-inom, ug sa paglabay sa panahon, akong gibiyahan usab ang panigarilyo ug uban pang bisyo."

"Before I became Muslim, I was a heavy drinker. However, as I came to know the truth, my habit of drinking gradually disappeared, and over time, I also let go of smoking and other vices."

Blaan convert 8: "Dili kami mokaon og baboy, ug kung mag-andam og pagkaon para sa mga panagtigom, among ginaseguro nga tanan halal-walay haram nga sangkap ug alkohol. Maayo kaayo among pagpili sa mga sangkap aron masunod ang mga dietary nga panuntunan sa Islam."

"We do not consume pork, and when preparing food for social gatherings, we ensure that everything is halal-free from haram ingredients and alcohol. We are extremely careful in selecting ingredients to uphold Islamic dietary guidelines."

Blaan convert 9: "Oo, nagsunod ko sa mga dietary nga panuntunan sa Islam. Sa una, mokaon ko og baboy, apan karon dili na. Dili usab ako mokaon sa mga restoran nga nagaserbisyo og baboy, mas maayo nga mokaon sa balay aron masiguro nga ang tanang pagkaon halal ug walay haram nga sangkap."

"Yes, I follow Islamic dietary guidelines. While I used to eat pork before, I have completely stopped now. I also avoid restaurants that serve pork, as I prefer eating at home, where I can ensure that all food is halal and free from any forbidden ingredients."

Blaan convert 10: "Mugluto ko usahay ug personal nga moadto sa merkado aron maampingong mapili ang mga sangkap alang sa akong pamilya. Kung naa ko sa mga panagtapok sa gawas sa balay ug dili sigurado sa mga sangkap sa pagkaon, mas maayo nga dili nako mokaon aron masiguro nga masunod ang dietary nga panuntunan sa Islam. Apan, kanunay akong mangutana nga may pagrespeto."

"I cook from time to time and personally go to the market to carefully select ingredients for my family. When attending social gatherings outside my home, if I am unsure about the ingredients in the food, I choose not to eat to ensure I follow Islamic dietary guidelines. However, I always ask respectfully."

Synthesis:

The socio-cultural transformation among Blaan converts to Islam is deeply reflected in various aspects of their daily lives, from personal identity shifts to family structures and communal interactions. Their conversion has led to significant changes in dress code, communication styles, and adherence to Islamic teachings, reinforcing a sense of belonging within the Muslim community. Many have embraced the hijab and modest attire as a visible representation of their faith, while their communication is now infused with respectful speech and Islamic expressions such as Alhamdulillah and Insha'Allah. These adjustments mark a profound departure from their indigenous practices, requiring careful integration into their new religious framework. Despite challenges in reconciling their cultural heritage with Islamic values, converts remain committed to upholding their faith and fostering respectful dialogue to bridge differences.

Another key transformation lies in family dynamics and dietary habits, as Blaan converts reshape their household responsibilities and food consumption to align with Islamic teachings. Fathers and mothers emphasize fairness, responsibility, and unconditional love, ensuring that Islamic principles guide their parenting and marital relationships. Dietary changes are equally significant, with converts strictly adhering to halal food requirements and avoiding haram substances like pork and alcohol. This shift impacts social engagements, as they carefully select ingredients and remain cautious when eating outside their homes. Overall, their journey into Islam is characterized by perseverance, adaptation, and unwavering devotion, as they navigate the complexities of faith while striving to maintain harmony within their families and communities.

Change in Professional Attitude and Performance

The conversion of the Blaan community to Islam has not only transformed their spiritual and cultural identity but has also significantly influenced their professional attitudes and economic engagement. This shift has led to a redefinition of work ethics, responsibility, and financial stability, as Islamic principles emphasize diligence, integrity, and community support in professional life. Through their integration into the broader Muslim society, Blaan converts have gained access to expanded trade networks, financial aid, and economic programs that foster growth and development. As they navigate these changes, their evolving professional mindset reflects a balance between their indigenous heritage and their newly embraced religious values, demonstrating an ongoing transformation shaped by socio-religious influences.

Buisson (2017) explores the potential for economic empowerment through religious conversion, particularly among marginalized communities. For the Blaan, embracing Islam has opened new pathways toward financial stability and independence. By integrating into the broader Muslim community, they gain access to expanded trade networks, financial support systems, and economic opportunities that foster growth and development. This transformation not only reshapes their professional engagements but also strengthens their cultural and social identities in light of their evolving economic landscape.

Work as Ibadah

Viewing work as an act of Ibadah transforms mundane tasks into meaningful activities. This perspective allows the Blaan converts to find deeper fulfillment and satisfaction in their roles. By aligning their professional responsibilities with their spiritual values, they are able to serve their community with greater dedication and compassion.

The initial challenges faced due to cultural differences highlight the resilience and determination of the converts. Their ability to gain acceptance and respect from colleagues over time demonstrates their commitment to living in accordance with Islamic principles. This acceptance has facilitated a peaceful and harmonious work environment, enabling them to effectively contribute to the community.

Embracing faith has had a positive influence on their professional responsibilities. By viewing their work as *Ibadah*, they are able to promote peace, harmony, and unity within the community. This perspective not only enriches their personal lives but also enhances their professional satisfaction and economic stability.

The alignment of their work with their spiritual values has made their professional roles more meaningful. This alignment allows them to lead with integrity, compassion, and a strong sense of purpose, ultimately benefiting the community they serve.

Blaan convert 3: "Gawas pa sa suporta gikan sa akong mga kauban, gitagaan ko ni Allah ug promotion sa akong trabaho. Kini nga promotion dili lamang nagpausbaw sa akong professional nga kahimtang apan nagpasiugda usab sa akong pagtuo nga ang giya ni Allah magdala ug positibong kausaban sa kinabuhi sa usa ka tawo. Ang promotion nagpakita sa akong dedikasyon ug kugihan nga trabaho, nga giila sa akong mga superyor.

Labaw sa tanan, nag-usab gyud ang akong panan-aw bahin sa akong trabaho. Karon akong nakita ang akong trabaho isip usa ka akto sa *Ibadah* (pagsimba) ug dili lamang usa ka paagi sa pagpanginabuhi. Kini nga pagbag- o sa hunahuna nagpalalum sa akong pagbati sa katuyoan ug dedikasyon sa akong mga katungdanan. Nakita nako ang matag buluhaton ug interaksyon isip usa ka higayon sa pag-alagad kang Allah ug sa akong komunidad, nga nagdala ug mas dako nga pagbati sa katagbawan ug kalipay sa akong professional nga kinabuhi.

Pinaagi sa pag-integrar sa akong pagtuo sa akong adlaw-adlaw nga trabaho, mas nakaplagan nako ang akong kaugalingon nga mas motivated ug driven. Ang espirituhanong katagbawan nga naggikan sa kahibalo nga ang akong mga paningkamot naghatag ug kalipay kang Allah naghatag ug lawom nga dimensyon sa akong trabaho. Kini nagdasig kanako nga buhaton ang akong mga katungdanan uban ang mas dako nga dedikasyon, kalooy, ug pagka-epektibo.

Dugang pa, kini nga kasinatian nagtugot usab kanako sa pagdasig ug pag-edukar sa uban bahin sa Islam. Pinaagi sa akong mga aksyon ug dedikasyon, ako naglaum nga maipakita ang positibong epekto nga mahimo sa pagtuo sa kinabuhi sa usa ka tawo, sa personal ug professional nga

aspeto. Nagtinguha ako nga mahimong modelo sa akong mga kauban ug komunidad, nga nagpakita nga ang pagyakap sa Islam mahimong magdala ug espirituhanong ug professional nga pagtubo.

Sa kinatibuk-an, ang akong pag-convert sa Islam nagdala ug daghang mga panalangin sa akong kinabuhi. Ang pagtahud gikan sa akong mga kauban, ang promotion, ug ang bag-ong pagbati sa katuyoan tanan nagpalig-on sa usa ka mas mahinungdanon ug makatagbaw nga kinabuhi sa trabaho. Nagpasalamat ako sa kahigayonan nga makaalagad kang Allah pinaagi sa akong profesyon ug sa positibong pag-apekto sa akong komunidad."

"In addition to the support from my colleagues, Allah has blessed me with a promotion in my role. This promotion not only boosted my professional standing but also reinforced my belief that Allah's guidance brings about positive changes in one's life. The promotion served as a testament to my dedication and hard work, recognized by my superiors.

By integrating my faith into my daily work routine, I find myself more motivated and driven. The spiritual satisfaction that comes from knowing that my efforts are pleasing to Allah adds a profound dimension to my work. It has encouraged me to perform my duties with greater diligence, compassion, and excellence.

Furthermore, this experience has also allowed me to inspire and educate others about Islam. Through my actions and dedication, I hope to demonstrate the positive impact that faith can have on one's professional and personal life. I strive to be a role model for my colleagues and community, showing that embracing Islam can lead to both spiritual and professional growth.

In summary, my conversion to Islam has brought numerous blessings into my life. The respect from my colleagues, the promotion, and the renewed sense of purpose have all contributed to a more meaningful and fulfilling work life. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve Allah through my profession and to contribute positively to my community."

Blaan convert 5 :Gitan-aw nako karon ang akong trabaho isip usa ka akto sa Ibadah (pagsimba) ug dili lang usa ka trabaho. Kini nga panan-aw nagdala ug mas lawom nga pagbati sa katagbawan ug katuyoan sa akong papel, nga nagtugot kanako nga magserbisyo sa akong komunidad nga may dedikasyon ug kalooy. Ang pagyakap sa akong pagtuo dili lang nagpatubag sa akong personal nga kinabuhi apan positibo usab nga nakaimpluwensya sa akong mga professional nga katungdanan, nagtugot kanako nga magpalig-on sa kalinaw ug panaghiusa sulod sa komunidad."

I now view my work as an act of Ibadah (worship) rather than just a job. This perspective has brought a deeper sense of fulfillment and purpose to my role, enabling me to serve my community with dedication and

compassion. Embracing my faith has not only enriched my personal life but has also positively influenced my professional responsibilities, allowing me to promote peace and harmony within the community."

Synthesis:

The respondents' experiences highlight the positive economic impact and professional growth they have achieved since converting to Islam. Their ability to integrate their faith into their work life has provided them with a deeper sense of purpose and dedication. They have found acceptance and respect from their colleagues, which has facilitated smooth transitions and enhanced job satisfaction. Recognition and promotions in their respective fields have also contributed to their economic stability and professional development.

Morados and Malayang (2023) in "Balik-Islam in Some Selected Areas in Luzon and the National Capital Region" explore the role of community support in reinforcing the spiritual and social commitments of converts. Assmann (2008) in "Communicative and Cultural Memory" examines the balance between professional life and spiritual commitments, emphasizing how faith can provide a framework for ethical and purposeful living. Eder (2022) in "Converts to Islam and the Muslim Community in the Christian Philippines" highlights how conversion leads to a harmonious integration of faith and work, contributing to overall well-being and satisfaction.

Overall, these changes illustrate a harmonious integration of faith and work, leading to both economic and professional benefits, while reinforcing their commitment to their community and spiritual values.

Personal Transformations and Community Bonds

The Blaan people's shift to Islam has resulted in notable social transformations in General Santos City (GenSan). As they adopted a new belief system, the Blaan community began to witness changes in their social frameworks, interpersonal relationships, and communal interactions. The incorporation of Islamic practices brought about fresh social norms and values that altered their everyday experiences. This conversion facilitated better integration with the broader Muslim community, offering them new avenues for support and collaboration. Furthermore, this change influenced their sense of identity as they balanced their traditional heritage with Islamic teachings, leading to a distinct blend of cultural and religious aspects that continue to shape their community dynamics.

Katznelson and Rubin (2016) examine how religious conversion facilitates the integration of cultural and religious elements, resulting in a dynamic fusion of traditions. In the case of the Blaan, their adoption of Islamic practices while preserving aspects of their indigenous heritage illustrates

this process. This blending of customs and beliefs shapes a unique cultural identity that reflects both their ancestral roots and their newly embraced faith.

Gueguen (2010) examines the cultural and religious landscapes of the Blaan, emphasizing how their conversion to Islam has reshaped and expanded their cultural identity. This transition has added new religious dimensions to their traditional beliefs, creating a unique intersection between ancestral customs and Islamic influences. The study provides insight into how sacredness, death, and geographical elements play a role in this evolving identity. Community Bonds

Community bonds play a vital role in shaping social cohesion, trust, and shared identity among individuals, particularly in the context of religious and cultural transformation. For Blaan converts to Islam, their transition has not only influenced personal beliefs but has also strengthened their connection with their families, peers, and the broader Muslim community. Acceptance and support from their surroundings have helped them navigate the challenges of change while reinforcing their sense of belonging. Through guidance from religious mentors, communal encouragement, and shared values, Blaan converts have found renewed purpose and deeper relationships that reflect the essence of faith-driven unity and mutual care. Their journey underscores the significance of collective support in fostering resilience and inclusivity as they integrate Islamic principles into their daily lives.

Blaan convert 1: "Sukad n ga nibalhin ko sa Islam, kusog kaayo nga nagbag-o ang akong panglantaw bahin sa pamilya. Kaniadto, dili ko kaayo makahatag og pagtagad sa akong mga ginikanan, apan karon, ako nagbaton og dakong responsibilidad sa pag-atiman kanila. Ang panabang gikan sa among mga Ustads sa mosque nagtudlo kanako nga higugmaon ang akong pamilya sa paagi nga Islamiko. Kini nga pagbiyahe nakahatag kanako og kahigayonan nga mapalawom ang akong relasyon sa akong komunidad.

Ang akong mga kaubang B'laan midawat kanako ingong kinsa ko, ug kini nga pagdawat nagpalig-on kanako aron mahimong mas aktibo ug buotan sa kinabuhi sa komunidad. Sa pagdawat nako sa akong bag-ong pagtuo, nakakaplag ko og mas lawom nga koneksyon sa akong komunidad ug usa ka pagbati sa katuyuan. Nakahatag ko og positibong kontribusyon, ug nahimong usa ka panalangin alang kanila. Ang suporta ug pagdawat gikan sa akong pamilya ug sa mas halapad nga komunidad maoy labing importante sa akong personal nga pagtubo ug pagpahugot sa akong pagtuo. Kini nga pagbag-o maoy usa ka malampuson ug magbunga nga pagbiyahe,

nga naghatag kanako og kahigayunan nga maghimo og positibong epekto sa mga tao nga nagpalibot kanako."

"Since my conversion to Islam, my perspective on family has profoundly transformed. Previously, I had little concern for my parents, but now I feel a deep sense of responsibility to care for them. This shift is largely due to the guidance I've received from our Ustadz at the mosque, who have taught me to love my family in an Islamic way. This journey has not only changed my relationship with my family but has also allowed me to experience acceptance within my community. My fellow Blaans have embraced me for who I am, and this acceptance has empowered me to become more engaged and active in community life.

In embracing my new faith, I have found a deeper connection with my community and a sense of purpose. I've been able to contribute positively, becoming a blessing to those around me. The support and acceptance from both my family and the broader community have been instrumental in my personal growth and in strengthening my faith. This transformation has been a profound and fulfilling journey, enabling me to develop meaningful relationships and make a positive impact on those around me."

Blaan convert 2: "Ang ilang pagdasig ug ang halapad nga suporta sa komunidad nalangay kaayo, nagtudlo kanako sa mas maayong pag-atiman sa akong panglawas ug kahimsog. Ang mga Ustads sa among mosque nagdula og dakong papel sa pag-edukar kanako bahin sa kaimportante sa panglawas gikan sa Islamikong perspektibo, nga dako kaayo nga nakaimpluwensya sa akong paagi sa personal ug pamilya nga pag-atiman. Kini nga kolektibong sistema sa suporta nakapauswag dili lamang sa akong pisikal ug mental nga kahimsog apan usab nagpahugot sa akong relasyon sa akong pamilya ug komunidad.

Ako gayud nabati ang positibong epekto sa kini nga suporta sa komunidad, nga nahimong usa ka panalagin sa akong kinabuhi. Kini naghatag kanako og gahum nga maghimo og maayong mga pagpili alang sa kahimsog ug aron mahimong mas maayong mag-atiman sa akong pamilya. Ang pagdawat ug gugma nga akong nadawat gikan sa komunidad nga Muslim nahimong importante sa akong personal nga pagtubo ug pagbag-o."

"Their encouragement and the broader community's support have been invaluable, teaching me how to better manage my health and well-being. The Ustadz at our mosque played a crucial role in educating me about the importance of health from an Islamic perspective, which greatly influenced my approach to personal and family care. This collective support system has not only improved my physical and mental health but also strengthened my relationship with my family and community.

I truly feel the positive impact of this communal support, which has been a blessing in my life. It has empowered me to make healthier choices and to be a better caregiver to my family. The acceptance and love I have received from the Muslim community have been instrumental in my personal growth and transformation."

Blaan convert 9: "Ang pagdawat ug suporta gikan sa komunidad nakapalig-on kanako nga maghimo og positibong mga kausaban sa akong kinabuhi ug makatabang sa uban. Pinaagi sa pagpalambo sa edukasyon, nakita nako ang usa ka dako nga pag-uswag sa kinatibuk-ang kahimsog sa among komunidad. Kini nga pagbiyahe nagtudlo kanako sa bili sa pagpadayon ug sa kusog nga nagagikan sa pagtuo ug panaghiusa.

"The acceptance and support from the community have empowered me to make positive changes in my life and help others. By promoting education, I have seen a noticeable improvement in our community's overall well-being. This journey has taught me the value of perseverance and the strength that comes from faith and unity.

The conversion to Islam has brought significant changes to the Blaan community, particularly in how they build and maintain relationships within their families and the broader society. Many converts express a renewed sense of responsibility toward their loved ones, guided by Islamic teachings that emphasize family unity, respect for parents, and communal support. Through the mentorship of Ustadz at local mosques, they have embraced deeper familial connections and become more active in their communities. Acceptance from their fellow Blaan and Muslim peers has strengthened their confidence, allowing them to contribute positively to society while fulfilling their spiritual obligations. This transition has not only reshaped personal relationships but has also instilled a sense of purpose, encouraging converts to uphold values of love, fairness, and social harmony.

Beyond family structures, the support system within the Muslim community has had a profound impact on their well-being. Converts have learned to prioritize their health and make more mindful choices, influenced by Islamic teachings on self-care. The encouragement and collective support have empowered them to take on active roles in improving both their personal lives and their communities. Many have also channeled their energy into educational initiatives, recognizing the importance of knowledge in fostering societal growth. Through faith and unity, Blaan converts have found strength in perseverance, demonstrating how religious transformation can lead to both personal and communal empowerment.

Improved Literacy

Improved literacy plays a crucial role in personal and societal development, shaping individuals' ability to engage with education, economic opportunities, and informed decision-making. For the Blaan community, the shift toward embracing literacy has been deeply influenced by their conversion to Islam, which emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge as a fundamental principle. Through increased access to both secular and religious education, Blaan converts have experienced transformative changes in their intellectual and social landscapes. With the support of the Muslim community, they have gained better educational resources, leading to higher literacy rates and greater opportunities for personal and communal advancement. This progress underscores the importance of education as a means of empowerment, fostering resilience and growth while bridging traditional and modern learning approaches.

Blaan convert 4: "Kini nga bag-ong pagtuo sa edukasyon nakapahimo og dako nga kaayohan sa among komunidad nga nakita sa umaabot. Ang kolektibong mga paningkamot ug suporta gikan sa Muslim nga komunidad nagdala og dakong kausaban sa among kinabuhi. Ang akong mga anak karon adunay mas maayong mga oportunidad sa edukasyon nga wala kaniadto. Ang pag-focus sa pareho nga sekular ug relihiyosong edukasyon naghatag og mas balanseng ug komprehensibong pagkat-on alang kanila. Ang pagdawat ug giya gikan sa Muslim nga komunidad maoy labing importante sa kini nga pagbag-o. Nakapalig-on kini kanako ug sa uban sa akong komunidad aron magtinguha alang sa mas maayong kaugmaon pinaagi sa edukasyon. Ang positibong epekto sa among literacy rates ug kinatibuk-ang kahimtang usa ka pagpakita sa gahum sa suporta sa komunidad ug pagtuo."

"This newfound appreciation for education has significantly improved our community's outlook on the future. The collective efforts and support from the Muslim community have made a substantial difference in our lives. My children now have better educational opportunities, which was not as accessible before. The emphasis on both secular and religious education has provided a more balanced and comprehensive learning experience for them.

The acceptance and guidance from the Muslim community have been instrumental in this transformation. It has empowered me and others in my community to strive for a better future through education. The positive impact on our literacy rates and overall well-being is a testament to the power of community support and faith."

Blaan convert 6: "Sa wala pa ko nag-Muslim, ang komunidad sa mga B'laan dili kaayo naghatag og pagtagad sa pamilya ug edukasyon, bisan pa man

ang kusog nga koneksyon sa komunidad. Alhamdulillah, ang Islam nagtudlo kanako sa kaimportante sa pamilya ug ang bili sa edukasyon".

"Before I became Muslim, the B'laan community didn't emphasize family and education much, despite our strong community bonds. While we had a tight-knit community, the importance of family and education was not given much attention. However, Alhamdulillah, Islam has taught me the significance of family and the value of education".

Blaan convert 10:"Kaniadto, ang komunidad sa Blaan wala kaayo naghatag og bili sa edukasyon. Apan nakita nako ang dagkong mga kausaban niini nga bahin. Karon, makakita ka og mga estudyante nga Blaan sa mga unibersidad, nagpadayon sa taas nga edukasyon. Personal nga nagtinguha ko og kahibalo ug nagbag-o ang akong panan-aw bahin sa pamilya. Alhamdulillah, ang akong pamilya karon mas maayo kung ikumpara sa wala pa ko nag-Muslim. Mapasalamaton ko sa akong mga kaubang nagbag-o nga naghatag og inspirasyon ug suporta kanako sa tibuok nga pagbiyahe. Ang akong kasinatian nagpakita sa kaimportante sa edukasyon ug sa positibong epekto nga ang suporta sa komunidad mahimong mahimo sa usa ka indibidwal. Ang pagbag-o nga akong nakita sa akong kaugalingon ug sa akong komunidad usa ka pagpasalamat sa gahum sa pagtuo ug kolektibong paningkamot. Nagtinguha ko nga ipadayon ang pag-promote sa edukasyon ug suporta sa komunidad, nagpaniguro nga kita tanan magtubo ug maghimo og mas maayong kaugmaon para sa atong mga pamilya ug komunidad."

"In the past, the Blaan community didn't place much value on education. However, I have witnessed significant changes in this regard. Now, you can see Blaan students in universities, pursuing higher education. Personally, I have sought knowledge and transformed my perspective towards family. Alhamdulillah, my family is now in a better place compared to before I converted to Islam. I am grateful to my fellow converts who have inspired and supported me throughout this journey.

My experience underscores the importance of education and the positive impact that a supportive community can have on an individual. The transformation I have witnessed in myself and my community is a testament to the power of faith and collective effort. I strive to continue promoting education and community support, ensuring that we all grow together and create a better future for our families and communities."

The conversion of Blaan individuals to Islam has brought a profound shift in their perspective on education, family, and community support. Previously, education was not a primary focus within the Blaan community, despite strong social bonds. However, through their newfound faith, many converts now recognize the importance of both secular and religious

education in shaping their future. The support from the Muslim community has played a crucial role in this transformation, enabling access to better educational opportunities for their children and fostering a more balanced approach to learning. This collective encouragement has strengthened their commitment to acquiring knowledge and securing a brighter future, highlighting how faith can drive meaningful social and educational development.

Beyond education, this transformation has also reshaped their family values and community engagement. Converts express gratitude for the acceptance and guidance they receive, which has empowered them to become active contributors to their community's progress. They emphasize the positive impact of collective efforts, noting improvements in literacy rates and overall well-being. Their journey illustrates how faith, when combined with strong communal support, can lead to lasting improvements in social structure, personal aspirations, and cultural preservation. This evolution underscores the power of education and unity in shaping a more promising future for the Blaan people.

Philosophy on Education

Education is a fundamental pillar in shaping individuals and communities, providing opportunities for growth, empowerment, and social progress. For Blaan converts to Islam, their philosophy on education has undergone a remarkable transformation, driven by both religious principles and communal support. Previously, access to education was limited due to economic hardships, and learning was not always prioritized. However, through Islam, they have come to appreciate the value of both secular and religious education, recognizing its role in strengthening family bonds, fostering individual development, and uplifting their community. Many have now dedicated themselves to ensuring that their children receive quality education, integrating both formal schooling and Islamic teachings to create a well-rounded learning experience.

Blaan convert 4: "Sukad nga nag-Muslim ko, daghan kaayo ang positibong mga kausaban nga akong nakita sa komunidad nga Blaan convert, labi na sa literacy rate. Daghan sa akong mga kauban nga nagbag-o usab nagkabat og dakong bili sa edukasyon. Personal nga nagfocus nako sa pagpadala sa akong mga anak sa eskwelahan. Sa wala pa ko mag-Muslim, lisod kaayo ang pag-access sa edukasyon tungod sa among kahimtang sa ekonomiya. Apan karon, pinaagi sa tabang sa mga kaubang Muslim ug uban pang tribo nga Muslim, natun-an nako ang kaimportante sa pag-edukar sa akong mga igsoon ug mga anak sa sekular ug Madrassah nga eskwelahan.

"Since I became Muslim, I have observed many positive changes in the Blaan convert community, particularly in terms of literacy rates. Many of my fellow converts now deeply value education. Personally, I now prioritize sending my children to school. Before my conversion, access to education was quite challenging due to economic constraints. However, with the support of fellow Muslims and other Muslim tribes, I have learned the importance of educating both my siblings and children in both secular and Madrasah schools."

Blaan convert 6: "Tungod sa akong pagbag-o, nasabtan nako ang kaimportante sa pag-amuma sa mga relasyon sa pamilya ug sa pagtuon. Karon, isip pinuno sa Balik Islam sa General Santos City, kami sa pipila ka akong mga kaubang Balik Islam nagpatukod og usa ka sentro aron atimanon ang mga panginahanglan sa mga bag-ong nagbag-o. Kini nga sentro nagserbisyo isip usa ka suportadong lugar diin ang mga bag-ong Muslim makaangkon og giya, suporta, ug mga kapanguhaan aron matabangan sila sa ilang pagbiyahe."

"Through my conversion, I have come to appreciate the importance of nurturing both familial relationships and educational pursuits. Now, as the head of Balik Islam in General Santos City, I and some of my fellow Balik Islam converts have established a center to cater to the needs of new converts. This center serves as a supportive space where new Muslims can find guidance, support, and resources to help them in their journey."

Blaan convert 8: "Sa wala pa ko nag-Muslim, wala koy gibutang nga dako nga bili sa akong pamilya ug nagtuo nga ang edukasyon dili para sa mga Blaan. Ang akong panghunahuna kay samok ug dili klaro. Apan human ko nag-Muslim, dakong kausaban ang nahitabo sa akong panan-aw. Karon, nagpalambo ko og edukasyon alang sa mga Blaan, dili Muslim, ug mga nagbag-o usab.

Ang Islam nakahatag kanako og pagbati sa katuyoan ug direksyon, nga naghatag kanako og kapasidad nga makatampo og positibo sa akong komunidad. Nakita nako nga dako ang kaayohan sa usa ka maayong edukasyon ug ang kaimportante sa lig-on nga mga koneksyon sa pamilya. Kini nga pagbag-o usa ka panalangin, naghatag kanako og kahigayonan nga mahimong ehemplo ug magdasig sa uban nga mangandoy og kahibalo ug maghatag og bili sa ilang pamilya. Pinaagi sa akong mga paningkamot, akong ginahandum nga maghimo og mas edukado ug suportado nga komunidad."

"Before I became Muslim, I didn't place much importance on my family and believed that education was not for the B'laan. My thinking was chaotic and unfocused. However, since embracing Islam, my perspective has changed dramatically. I now promote education among the B'laan, non-Muslims, and converts alike.

Islam has provided me with a sense of purpose and direction, enabling me to contribute positively to my community. I have seen firsthand the benefits of a well-rounded education and the importance of strong family bonds. This transformation has been a blessing, allowing me to lead by example and encourage others to seek knowledge and prioritize their families. Through my efforts, I hope to create a more educated and supportive community".

Blaan convert 9: "Ang pagkat-on nga mahimong usa ka Blaan Balik Islam dili sayon, apan Alhamdulillah, ang pagbiyahe nahimong mas sayon uban ang tabang sa akong mga kaubang nagbag-o ug sa edukasyon nga akong nadawat. Kini nga suporta dako kaayong nakausab sa akong panan-aw bahin sa edukasyon ug pamilya. Karon, adunay ko na'y mas lawom nga pagtagad sa akong pamilya ug ang kaimportante sa aktibong pag-apil sa komunidad.

Ang Islam nagmando kanato nga padayon nga magtuon, ug kini nga prinsipyo nakapalihok kanako nga mangita pa og kahibalo. Isip usa ka propagator, apil sa akong da'wah ang kaimportante sa sekular ug espirituhanong edukasyon sa akong komunidad. Ang epekto sa kini nga balanseng pamaagi sa edukasyon dako kaayo, nga nagpalambo sa pagtubo ug pagsabot sa mga Blaan ug sa mga nagbag-o."

"Becoming a Blaan Balik Islam was not easy, but Alhamdulillah, the journey was made smoother with the help of my fellow converts and the education I received. This support has significantly changed my perspective on education and family. I now have a deeper appreciation for my family and the importance of being an active part of the community.

Islam commands us to continually educate ourselves, and this principle has driven me to seek more knowledge. As a propagator, I include in my da'wah the importance of both secular and spiritual education within my community. The impact of this balanced approach to education has been profound, fostering growth and understanding among the Blaan and converts alike".

The accounts of the Blaan individuals who converted reveal a significant change brought about by the combination of education, faith, and community support. These narratives highlight how adopting Islam not only provided them with a renewed sense of purpose and direction but also altered their perspectives on the value of education, family ties, and social responsibility. By placing importance on both secular and Islamic education, these individuals demonstrate the comprehensive nature of learning as a means to empower themselves and their communities. Their initiatives to create supportive centers and promote education underscore the importance of leadership in driving positive transformation.

Furthermore, their experiences illustrate how a well-rounded education can help close cultural and economic divides, ultimately resulting in a more robust and unified community. In summary, these stories show that when education is combined with faith and a sense of purpose, it becomes a powerful catalyst for personal growth and community advancement, laying the foundation for a brighter and more inclusive future.

Community Leadership

Community leadership plays a crucial role in fostering unity, empowerment, and social progress, especially in the context of religious and cultural transformation. Among Blaan converts to Islam, leadership has become an avenue for bridging communities, promoting harmony, and ensuring that individuals receive guidance and support. Their newfound faith has reshaped their approach to leadership, emphasizing fairness, inclusivity, and service. Many converts, now in leadership positions, have embraced their responsibilities with confidence, recognizing their ability to make impactful decisions that benefit both their Blaan heritage and their Islamic beliefs. Through their roles, they have become instrumental in facilitating understanding, reducing conflicts, and strengthening communal ties.

Blaan convert 2: "Tungod sa kini nga posisyon, nakahatag ko og mas makatabang nga serbisyo sa akong mga kaubang Blaan. Ang akong dedikasyon sa akong pagtuo ug trabaho nakakuha og ilang pagsalig ug respeto. Sila nagsugod sa pagdawat ug pag-uyon sa akong mga desisyon, nga nagpakita sa ilang suporta ug pagdawat. Kini nga pagdawat naka-empower gyud nako, naghatag og kumpiyansa ug katuyuan sa akong mga responsibilidad. Ang suporta gikan sa Muslim nga komunidad ug sa akong mga kaubang Blaan importante kaayo sa akong personal nga pagtubo ug professional nga paglambo. Mapasalamaton ko sa kahigayunan nga mag-uban ang akong kultural nga pagkahibalo ug ang akong bag-ong pagtuo, nga mahimong positibong impluwensya sa akong komunidad."

"Being in this position allowed me to serve my fellow Blaan people in more meaningful ways. My commitment to my faith and my work earned their trust and respect. They began to affirm and embrace my decisions, reflecting their acceptance and support. This acceptance has been profoundly empowering, allowing me to navigate my responsibilities with confidence and purpose. The support from both the Muslim community and my Blaan people has been instrumental in my personal growth and professional development. I am grateful for the opportunity to bridge my cultural heritage with my newfound faith, becoming a positive influence in my community."

Blaan convert 5 : "Ang Islam adunay dakong positibong epekto sa akong kinabuhi. Kaniadto nga Blaan pa ko, nagbati ko nga daw walay bili. Apan nagpasalamat ko kang Allah sa pagbag-o sa akong kinabuhi. Siya ang naghatag kanako sa posisyon nga mahimong pangulo sa Barangay Peace Council. Nakita nako kini nga usa ka panalangin gikan sa Diyos, kay kini naghatag kanako og kahigayonan nga magamit ang akong pagkapangulo sa Islamikong paagi.

Ang akong bag-ong pagtuo naghatag kanako og bag-ong perspektibo sa kinabuhi ug pamunoan. Kini nagtabang kanako sa paghimo og balanse nga mga desisyon sulod sa akong komunidad, diin ang mga Blaan ug mga Muslim nga nagbag-o magkasumpaki usahay. Tungod kay Blaan man ko kaniadto, maka-relate ko sa duha ka grupo ug magtinguha nga makab-ot ang kalinaw. Kini nga pagsabot naghatag kanako og abilidad nga mahimong tulay tali sa duha ka grupo, nga nagpaniguro nga ang akong mga desisyon mao ang patas ug inclusive."

"Islam has had a profoundly positive impact on my life. Before my conversion, as a Blaan, I felt as though I had nothing. But I thank Allah for allowing me to change. He has blessed me with my current position as the head of the Barangay Peace Council. I see this role as a divine blessing, as it enables me to exercise my leadership in an Islamic way.

My new faith has given me a fresh perspective on life and leadership. It helps me make balanced decisions within my community, where B'aaan individuals and Muslim converts often interact and sometimes have conflicts. Having been a Blaan myself, I can relate to both sides and strive to create harmony. This understanding allows me to be a bridge between the two groups, ensuring that my decisions are fair and inclusive."

Blaan convert 6: "Ang among paningkamot nagtinguha nga magbuo og pagbati sa pagka-apil ug komunidad taliwala sa mga bag-ong nagbag-o, nagpaniguro nga aduna sila'y suporta aron molambo ug espirituhanon ug praktikal. Pinaagi sa paghatag og kahinungdanon sa edukasyon ug mga bili sa pamilya, among ginahandum nga mapalig-on ang among komunidad ug

maghimo og positibong epekto sa kinabuhi sa mga moapil kanamo. Ang pagbag-o sa among komunidad usa ka testimonyo sa gahum sa pagtuo ug ang kaimportante sa pagsuporta sa usag usa sa among mga pagbiyahe."

"Our efforts aim to foster a sense of belonging and community among new converts, ensuring they have the necessary support to thrive both spiritually and practically. By emphasizing education and family values, we hope to empower our community and create a positive impact on the lives of those who join us. The transformation in our community is a testament to the power of faith and the importance of supporting each other in our journeys".

Blaan convert 8: "Isip usa ka community coordinator sa DSWD, dako kaayo ang akong pagpasalamat sa pag-angkon og kahibalo ug pagbahinbahin niini sa uban. Ang Islam nagtudlo kanako nga mahimong usa ka maayo nga lider ug maghatag og bili sa pamilya. Ang suporta nga akong nadawat gikan sa akong komunidad ug ang akong bag-ong panan-aw nakapalig-on kanako nga magpauswag sa akong komunidad ug maghatag og inspirasyon sa uban nga mangandoy og maayong edukasyon ug kalipay sa pamilya."

"As a community coordinator under DSWD, I deeply appreciate acquiring knowledge and sharing it with others. Islam has taught me to be a good leader and to value family. The support I have received from my community and my new outlook have empowered me to improve my community and inspire others to pursue education and familial happiness."

The rise of community leaders is another important theme in the stories of these individuals. Numerous individuals have taken on leadership positions within their communities, offering guidance and support to others based on their experiences. Their narratives demonstrate how personal development can lead to community leadership, aiding in the reconciliation of cultural and religious differences and fostering harmony.

The narrative of Blaan convert 5 showcases her journey as a community leader. Her dedication to her faith and her efforts earned her the admiration and trust of her fellow Blaan people. This admiration and trust motivated her to assume a leadership position within her community, where she guided and supported others in their own paths. Her story highlights the influence of faith in forming community leaders and the beneficial effects of community leadership on both personal and communal growth. Similarly, Blaan convert 6's story reflects his rise as a community leader. As the head of Balik Islam in General Santos City, he and other converts established a center to meet the needs of new converts.

This center provides a nurturing environment where new Muslims can seek guidance, assistance, and resources for their journey. His role in the community has fostered a sense of belonging and unity among new

converts, demonstrating the significance of community leadership in nurturing harmony and understanding. These accounts emphasize the influence of faith in developing community leaders.

The dedication to their faith and communities empowers individuals to embrace leadership roles, guiding and supporting others along their journeys. This leadership is instrumental in bridging cultural and religious divides, fostering harmony and understanding within the community.

Support Networks

Support networks are crucial for individual growth and development, as evidenced by these accounts. They offer essential encouragement, guidance, and help for individuals to navigate challenges, including the process of conversion and integration. Additionally, a solid support network cultivates a sense of community and belonging, which is vital for promoting personal acceptance and growth.

Blaan convert 10: "Ang pagbag-o ngadto sa Islam gikan sa tribo nga Blaan dili sayon nga pagbiyahe, apan Alhamdulillah, kini nahimong dako nga balos. Nasabtan ko nga ang komunidad adunay dako nga papel sa personal nga pagtubo ug nakadasig kanako nga magpabilin nga lig-on sa akong desisyon. Karon, adunay ko na'y labaw nga pagtagad sa kaimportante sa usa ka suporta nga komunidad alang sa personal nga paglambo.

"Becoming a convert to Islam from the Blaan tribe was not an easy journey, but Alhamdulillah, it has been immensely rewarding. I understand that the community plays a significant role in personal growth and has encouraged me to stay firm in my decision. I now appreciate the importance of a supportive community for personal development".

The narrative of the Blaan convert illustrates the significant effect of community support on well-being. The encouragement and solidarity he received from other converts and the broader Muslim community played a key role in his personal development. This example highlights the essential need for a dependable support system during major life changes.

It demonstrates how a caring and supportive community can provide the strength and reassurance necessary to tackle difficulties, especially during transformative journeys like converting to Islam. By acknowledging the impact of a strong support network, this account emphasizes how collective support not only enhances resilience but also fosters confidence in one's choices and encourages meaningful personal growth.

Responses to the Changes and Challenges

The conversion of the Blaan people in General Santos City (GenSan) to Islam has brought about significant cultural, social, and economic shifts. As with any major transformation, these changes have been accompanied by a variety of challenges.

The Blaan community's reactions to these transformations and difficulties showcase their resilience and adaptability. As they find a way to balance the preservation of their traditional customs with the acceptance of their new religious identity, the Blaan have devised strategies to tackle conflicts, promote unity, and integrate into the wider Muslim community. This journey illustrates their strength and ingenuity in overcoming challenges and fostering a harmonious coexistence between their cultural heritage and Islamic beliefs.

Navigating Life with Non-Muslim Blaan while Upholding Islamic Beliefs

The experience of the Blaan people in General Santos City (GenSan) who have converted to Islam while maintaining relationships with non-Muslim Blaan presents unique challenges and opportunities.

IslamQA (2023) discusses the principles of interacting with non-Muslims, emphasizing moderation, kindness, and justice. The Blaan community applies these teachings to maintain respectful and positive relationships with non-Muslim family and friends.

Oxford Academic (2013) highlights the importance of justice and fairness in dealings with non-Muslims, as outlined in the Qur'an. This principle guides the Blaan in their interactions, ensuring mutual respect and understanding.

Sabr (Patience)

Sabr, or patience, is a core Islamic virtue essential for enduring life's challenges and remaining steadfast in faith. The Qur'an frequently emphasizes the importance of patience, especially in the face of adversity.

Abu-Raiya, H., & Pargament, K. I. (2015), this study explores how Islamic values, including Sabr, contribute to resilience among Muslims. It emphasizes that Sabr is not merely passive endurance but an active, faith-driven practice that involves engaging with challenges while maintaining hope and trust in divine justice.

Esack, F. (1997), Farid Esack offers a thematic guide to the Qur'an, emphasizing Sabr in the broader context of faith and social justice. The book explains that patience is not just an individual virtue but a collective one, essential for building a just and harmonious society. Sabr, according to Esack, is a driver of activism and perseverance in the face of systemic oppression.

Blaan convert 1: "Ang pagpuyo sa usa ka dili Muslim nga komunidad sa akong karaang tribo nga Blaan lison kaayo, apan ang Qur'an nagtudlo kanako sa pagkinabuhi nga uyon sa iyang mga pagtulun-an. Ang pagkamainantuson (Sabr) maoy bahin sa akong adlaw-adlaw nga kinabuhi, nga nagatabang kanako nga magpabilin nga lig-on ug maabtikon sa akong

pagtuo kang Allah. Ang akong dedikasyon sa akong mga pagtuo wala lang nagpalig-on sa akong pagtuo, apan naghimo usab nga akong kaugalingon mas madani sa mga dili Muslim, nga nakakita sa mga positibong kausaban sa akong kinaiya. Ang pag-navigate sa kinabuhi sa usa ka komunidad nga dili nagbahin sa akong pagtuo nagkinahanglan ug pagsabot, pagkamalumo, ug kusog nga pag-ila sa kaugalingon."

"Living in a non-Muslim community within my old Blaan tribe is challenging, but the Qur'an guides me to live my life in accordance with its teachings. Patience (Sabr) is a vital part of my daily life, helping me stay grounded and faithful to Allah. My commitment to my beliefs has not only strengthened my faith but also made me more appealing to non-Muslims, who see the positive changes in me. Navigating life in a community that does not share my faith requires understanding, tolerance, and a strong sense of identity."

Blaan convert 2: "Ang pagkamainantuson (Sabr) kinahanglan kaayo tungod kay aduna gyud mga tawo nga mosulti og dili maayo bahin sa imong bagong pagtuo. Apan, kini nga pagkamainantuson nagatabang kanako nga magpabilin nga lig-on ug matinud-anon sa akong mga pagtuo. Kung aduna ko'y higayon, nagtudlo ko sa Pulong ni Allah sa akong pamilya ug komunidad. Ang pagbahinbahin niini nga mga pagtulon-an dili lang nagpalig-on sa akong pagtuo apan nagtabang usab sa uban nga masabtan ang mga prinsipyo sa Islam. Dugang pa, ang pag-atiman sa mga dili Muslim nagatugot kanako nga ipakita kung unsa gyud ang tinuod nga Muslim. Pinaagi sa akong mga lihok ug interaksyon, nagtinguha ko nga magpakita sa mga bili sa kaayo, kalooy, ug pagkamainantuson nga mao ang sentro sa Islam.

Ang pagkinabuhi nga uyon sa mga pagtulon-an sa Qur'an ug ang pagpraktis sa Sabr sa pag-atubang sa mga hagit nakahatag ug dako nga kausaban. Kini nakatugot kanako nga maghimo og mga tulay sa pagsabot ug respeto sulod sa akong komunidad, nga nagpakita sa positibong epekto sa akong pagtuo."

"Patience (Sabr) is essential because some people may say unkind things about my newfound faith. However, this patience helps me stay grounded and true to my beliefs.

Whenever I have the opportunity, I teach the Word of Allah to my family and community. Sharing these teachings not only strengthens my faith but also helps others understand the principles of Islam. Additionally, caring for non-Muslims allows me to demonstrate what it truly means to be a Muslim.

Through my actions and interactions, I strive to embody the values of kindness, compassion, and patience, which are at the heart of Islam.

Living out the teachings of the Qur'an and practicing Sabr in the face of challenges has been transformative. It has allowed me to build bridges of understanding and respect within my community, showcasing the positive impact of my faith."

Blaan convert 3: "Ang akong kasinatian isip usa ka nagbag-o nga nagpuyo sa dili Muslim nga komunidad usa ka roller coaster. Apan kini usab usa ka pribilehiyo kay nagtuo ko nga gibutang ko ni Allah aron magkinabuhi og Muslim nga mga pamaagi. Komitado ko sa pag-apply sa akong nakat-unan gikan sa mga pagtulon-an sa mosque, magpabilin nga matinud-anon sa akong bag-ong pagtuo, ug magpraktis sa pagkamainantuson, kay nasabtan ko nga ang tanan usa ka proseso.

Ang pagpuyo sa usa ka lain-laing palibot nagdala og mga hagit ug mga panalangin. Ang inisyal nga bahin sa akong pagbiyahe napuno sa mga adjustments ug mga kasinatian sa pagkat-on, apan ang akong pagtuo ug ang mga pagtulon-an nga akong nadawat mao ang akong giya nga kahayag. Ang pagkamainantuson (Sabr) importante kaayo sa pagtabang kanako nga ma- navigate ang mga taas ug ubos, ug kini nagpadayon nga usa ka haligi sa akong adlaw-adlaw nga kinabuhi.

Isip usa ka lig-on sa akong pagtuo, nagtinguha ko nga ipakita ang mga bili sa Islam sa akong mga interaksyon sa uban. Kini nga dedikasyon dili lang nagpalig-on sa akong kaugalingon nga pagtuo apan nag-alagad usab ingon usa ka hilom nga imbitasyon alang sa uban nga masabtan ug maappreciate ang katahum sa Islam. Bisan pa ang pagbiyahe puno og hagit, kini usab dako nga balos kay nagpadool kini kanako kang Allah ug naghatag kanako og higayon nga motubo espirituhanon ug personal."

"Being a convert living in a non-Muslim community has indeed been a roller coaster. However, it is also a privilege because I believe Allah has placed me here to live out Muslim ways. I am committed to applying what I have learned from the teachings in the mosque, staying faithful to my new faith, and practicing patience, as I understand that everything is a process.

Living in such a diverse environment comes with its unique set of challenges and blessings. The initial phase of my journey was filled with adjustments and learning experiences, but my faith and the teachings I received have been my guiding light. Patience (Sabr) has been essential in helping me navigate the ups and downs, and it continues to be a cornerstone of my daily life.

Being steadfast in my faith, I strive to exemplify the values of Islam in my interactions with others. This dedication not only strengthens my own faith but also serves as a silent invitation for others to understand and appreciate the beauty of Islam. The journey may be challenging, but it is also immensely rewarding as it brings me closer to Allah and allows me to grow spiritually and personally."

Blaan convert 4: "Ang pagkamainantuson (sabr) maoy akong pinakaunang tubag sa mga dili Muslim. Ang sabr importante kaayo sa pag-atubang sa bisan unsang negatibo o dili pagsabot gikan sa uban. Pinaagi sa kanunay nga pagpadayag sa mga prinsipyo sa Islam pinaagi sa akong mga lihok, naglaum ko nga mapakita ang tinuod nga essence sa akong pagtuo ug ang positibong epekto niini sa akong kinabuhi.

Ang pagbalhin sa Islam usa ka dakong desisyon, ug ang pagpuyo sa iyang mga pagtulon-an matag adlaw nga nagdala og mga hagit ug balos. Kini nagpalig-on sa akong pagtuo ug nagtabang kanako nga magdawat og kahapsay ug katuyuan. Pinaagi sa pagkamainantuson ug lig-on nga komitment sa akong mga pagtuo, ako nagnavigate sa mga komplikasyon sa pagpuyo sa usa ka dili Muslim nga komunidad, nagpabilin nga tinuod sa akong pagtuo ug mga bili."

"Patience, or sabr, was my primary response when dealing with non-Muslims. Sabr has been crucial in dealing with any negativity or misunderstandings from others. By consistently demonstrating the principles of Islam through my actions, I hope to show the true essence of my faith and its positive impact on my life.

Converting to Islam was a significant decision, and living out its teachings daily has been both challenging and rewarding. It has strengthened my faith and helped me foster a sense of peace and purpose. Through patience and a steadfast commitment to my beliefs, I navigate the complexities of living in a non-Muslim community, remaining true to my faith and values."

Blaan convert 5 : "Isip usa ka kapatás sa barangay kalinaw sa usa ka dili Muslim nga komunidad, usa kini ka dakong pribilehiyo. Gitan-aw nako kini nga usa ka higayon aron mahimong panalangin sa akong mga kaubang Blaans ug uban pang tinuohan sa akong komunidad ug opisina. Naningkamot ko nga magkinabuhi nga makapahimuot kang Allah, ug ang pagkamainantuson (Sabr) maoy akong labing maayo nga armas sa pag-atubang sa mga hagit nga may kalabotan sa akong bag-ong pagtuo.

Gitutokan ko ang akong papel uban ang tuyo nga pag-alagad sa akong komunidad nga puno sa kalooy ug pagsabot. Ang akong pagtuo nagagiyas kanako nga mahimong mainantuson ug konsiderado, labi na sa pag-atubang sa mga tawo nga adunay laing tinuohan. Ang Sabr nagatabang kanako nga magpabilin nga kalmado ug kalmado sa mga lisod nga sitwasyon, nga nagatugot kanako nga mag-giya nga epektibo ug maghimo og mga desisyon nga makaayo sa tanan."

"Being the head of barangay peace respondent in a non-Muslim community is a great privilege. I see it as an opportunity to be a blessing to my fellow Blaan and others of different faiths in my community and office. I strive to live a life that pleases Allah, and patience (Sabr) is my best weapon in facing the challenges related to my new-found faith.

I approach my role with the intention of serving my community with compassion and understanding. My faith guides me to be patient and considerate, especially when dealing with people of different beliefs. Sabr helps me maintain calm and composure in challenging situations, allowing me to lead effectively and make decisions that benefit everyone."

Blaan convert 6: "Akong mahinumduman ang usa ka panghitabo sa akong kinabuhi diin ang usa ka kauban nga Blaan nangutana kanako kung ngano nag-convert ko sa Islam. Ang iyang kuryosidad gikan sa mga kausaban nga iyang nabantayan sa akong kinaiya. Kaniadto, nakit-an niya ako nga nagkinabuhi nga murag walay Diyos, apan karon ako na ang Pinuno sa Balik Islam sa General Santos. Ang pagkamainantuson (Sabr) importante usab, uban sa pagpabilin nga lig-on sa imong pagtuo bisan unsa pa man.

"I can still remember one event in my life when my fellow Blaan asked me why I converted to Islam. His curiosity stemmed from the noticeable changes in my character. He had seen me before, living as if there were no God, but now I am the Head of Balik Islam in General Santos. Sabr, or patience, is also crucial, along with being steadfast in your faith no matter what.

Living by the principles of Islam, including maintaining patience and faith, has been instrumental in my journey. It has helped me navigate challenges and remain true to my beliefs. By embodying these values, I aim to inspire others and demonstrate the transformative power of faith."

Blaan convert 8: "Ang pagkamainantuson, o sabr, mao'y akong labing kusgan nga armas sa pag-navigate sa mga hagit ug mga dili pagsabot sa akong bag-ong pagtuo, nga nagpahinumdum kanako kanunay sa akong misyon isip usa ka tinuohan ni Allah."

"Patience, or sabr, is my strongest asset in navigating the challenges and misunderstandings of my newfound faith, constantly reminding me of my mission as a follower of Allah."

Blaan convert 9: "Ang pagkamainantuson (Sabr) mao ang labing maayo nga pamaagi sa pagpuyo sa dili Muslim nga komunidad. Ang pagkatinud-anon sa pulong ni Allah ug pagpuyo uyon niini usa sa labing maayo nga paagi aron mahimong panalangin sa uban."

"Patience (Sabr) is the best approach when living in a non-Muslim community. Being more faithful to the word of Allah and living according to its teachings is one of the best ways to be a blessing to others".

Blaan convert 10: "Ang pagkinabuhi nga balaan, uyon sa mga prinsipyo sa Islam, sama sa pag-undang sa pagpanigarilyo ug paglikay sa sugal, mao ang usa sa daghang mga kausaban nga nakatabang kanako human sa akong pag-convert. Ang pagpuyo sa dili Muslim nga komunidad mao ang usa ka hagit, apan akong gipanguha nga buhaton ang angay buhaton sa usa ka Muslim: magpabilin nga matinud-anon sa Tawhid (ang pagkausa ni Allah), pagbahinbahin sa pulong ni Allah, ug pagpraktis sa pagkamainantuson (Sabr) sa mga tawo sa akong palibot.

Ang pagpuyo sa taliwala sa mga dili Muslim nagkinahanglan ug pagkamainantuson ug pagsabot. Ako naninguha nga mahimong ehemplo sa mga bili sa Islam pinaagi sa akong mga lihok, naglaum nga mahimong positibong impluwensya ug tinubdan sa inspirasyon. Ang pagbahinbahin sa mga pagtulon-an ni Allah ug pagpadayag sa katahum sa Tawhid mao ang sentro sa akong misyon. Ang pagkamainantuson, o Sabr, nagtabang kanako sa pag-navigate sa bisan unsang dili pagsabot o mga hagit nga moabot, nagpa-remind kanako nga magpabilin nga tinuod sa akong pagtuo ug ipadayon ang pagpadayag niini nga mensahe."

"Living a holy life in accordance with Islamic principles, such as quitting smoking and abstaining from gambling, are among the many changes that have positively impacted me after converting to Islam. Living in a non-Muslim community is challenging, but I strive to do what a Muslim should do: be more faithful to Tawhid (the oneness of Allah), share the word of Allah, and practice patience (Sabr) with those around me.

Living among non-Muslims requires patience and understanding. I do my best to exemplify the values of Islam through my conduct, hoping to be a positive influence and a source of inspiration. Sharing the teachings of Allah and demonstrating the beauty of Tawhid are central to my mission. Patience, or Sabr, helps me navigate any misunderstandings or challenges that arise, reminding me to stay true to my faith and continue spreading its message."

Living by the Qur'an

Embracing the teachings of the Qur'an is fundamental to the spiritual and personal development of numerous Blaan converts. This deep commitment to Islamic values not only offers moral and spiritual direction but also influences their everyday lives, enhancing their character and sense of purpose. For these individuals, the Qur'an's teachings promote values like patience (Sabr), compassion, and resilience, which help them face challenges with dignity and faith.

By exemplifying these values, they foster respect and dialogue within their communities, bridging gaps between cultures and religions. Their commitment to the Qur'an not only alters their own lives but also positions them as positive role models, promoting unity, understanding, and mutual respect. This commitment highlights the transformative impact of living in accordance with the Qur'an, as they remain unwavering in their faith while motivating others through their actions and integrity. This foundational commentary explores the moral and spiritual principles laid out in the Qur'an and their relevance to daily life. It discusses patience, compassion, and sincerity as integral to living an Islamic life (Ali, A. Y. (1998). Qur'an guides Muslims in embodying values such as justice, humility, and kindness in both personal and community settings (Nasr, S. H. (2002).

Blaan convert 1: "Ang mga pagtulun-an sa Qur'an naghatag ug moral ug espirituhanong balangkas nga nagtabang kanako nga mapadayon ang akong integridad ug kalma sa pag-atubang sa mga hagit. Ang pagkamainantuson, o Sabr, importante kaayo, tungod kay kini nagatugot kanako sa pag-antus sa mga kalisdanan uban sa grasya ug pagtuo.

Ang akong dedikasyon sa pagkinabuhi nga matuod nga Islamiko nakaimpluwensya sa mga tawo sa akong palibot. Daghang mga dili Muslim sa akong komunidad ang nakabantay sa positibong kausaban sa akong kinaiya ug panglantaw. Kini nagbukas sa mga oportunidad alang sa dayalogo ug mutual nga respeto, nga nagpatunhay sa mas sayon nga pag-bridge sa mga kultura ug relihiyosong mga kalainan.

Ang kombinasyon sa pagkamainantuson, pagtuo, ug pagsunod sa mga prinsipyo sa Qur'an nagatabang kanako nga ma-navigate ang mga komplikado sa pagpuyo sa usa ka lain-lain nga komunidad samtang nagpabilin nga tinuod sa akong Islamikong identidad."

"The teachings of the Qur'an provide a moral and spiritual framework that helps me maintain my integrity and composure in the face of challenges. Patience, or Sabr, is particularly important, as it allows me to endure difficulties with grace and faith.

My dedication to living an authentic Islamic life has influenced those around me. Many non-Muslims in my community have noticed the positive

transformation in my behavior and outlook. This has opened up opportunities for dialogue and mutual respect, making it easier to bridge cultural and religious divides.

The combination of patience, faith, and adherence to Qur'anic principles helps me navigate the complexities of living in a diverse community while staying true to my Islamic identity."

Blaan convert 2: "Ang pagbaton og grasya ug pagkinabuhi nga uyon sa mga pagtulon-an sa Qur'an dako kaayo nga tabang para kanako sa pagpuyo sa usa ka dili Muslim nga komunidad."

"Being a blessing and living according to the teachings of the Qur'an has been a great help for me in a non-Muslim community".

Blaan convert 4: "Ang pagpuyo nga matinud-anon nga uyon sa mga pagtulon-an sa Qur'an mao'y sunod. Komitado ko nga magkinabuhi isip usa ka Muslim matag-adlaw, nga nagpadayag sa akong mga tinuohan pinaagi sa akong mga lihok. Kini nga pamaagi nakatabang kanako nga magpabilin nga lig-on, bisan unsay isulti sa uban bahin sa akong desisyon sa pagbalhin sa Islam.

Ang pagdawat sa Islam usa ka pagbiyahe sa pagtuo ug pagkamainantuson. Ang pagsunod sa mga pagtulon-an sa Qur'an naghatag kanako ug moral ug espirituhanong balangkas nga nagiya sa akong adlaw- adlaw nga mga interaksyon."

"Living a life faithfully in accordance with the Qur'an was next. I committed to living as a Muslim every day, ensuring that my actions reflected my beliefs. This approach has helped me remain steadfast, regardless of what others may say about my decision to convert to Islam.

Embracing Islam has been a journey of faith and patience. Adhering to the teachings of the Qur'an has provided me with a moral and spiritual framework that guides my daily interactions."

Blaan convert 5: "Ang pagpuyo sa usa ka kinabuhi nga nagpadayag sa mga pagtulon-an sa Qur'an nakatabang kanako nga magtukod og pagsalig ug respeto sulod sa akong komunidad. Pinaagi sa pagpakita sa mga bili sa Islam pinaagi sa akong mga lihok, naglaum ko nga magpatunhay ug kalinaw ug mutual nga respeto tali sa lain-laing mga tinuohan. Ang akong posisyon naghatag kanako og higayon nga magtukod og mga tulay ug magpalambo og usa ka malinawon nga panaghiusa, nga nagpakita sa positibong epekto sa akong pagtuo sa kahimsog ug kaayohan sa komunidad."

"Living a life that reflects the teachings of the Qur'an has been instrumental in building trust and respect within my community. By demonstrating the values of Islam through my actions, I hope to foster a sense of unity and mutual respect among different faiths. My position allows me to bridge gaps

and promote a harmonious coexistence, showcasing the positive impact of my faith on community health and well-being."

Blaan convert 6: "...Kini nga kausaban nakapainteres kaniya, ug akong gipahayag nga ang yawe mao ang pagpuyo uyon sa nakasulat sa Qur'an ug pagbuhat sa angay buhaton isip Muslim. Ang pag-convert sa Islam nagdala og dagkong kausaban sa akong kinabuhi, nga nagiyahan ko paingon sa espirituhanon ug personal nga pagtubo. Ang mga pagtulon-an sa Qur'an naghatag kanako og lig-on nga pundasyon alang sa akong mga aksyon ug mga desisyon. Ang pagdawat niini nga mga pagtulon-an dili lang nakapaayo sa akong kinaiya apan nakahatag usab kanako og higayon nga mahimong positibong impluwensya sa akong komunidad."

"...This transformation intrigued him, and I explained that the key is to live according to what is written in the Qur'an and to do what we should do as Muslims. Converting to Islam has brought significant changes in my life, guiding me towards a path of spiritual and personal growth. The teachings of the Qur'an have provided a solid foundation for my actions and decisions. Embracing these teachings has not only improved my character but also allowed me to become a positive influence within my community"

Blaan convert 7: "Ang pagpuyo nga nagpakita sa mga pagtulon-an ni Allah maoy sentro sa akong adlaw-adlaw nga kinabuhi. Nagtinguha ko nga ipakita ang mga bili sa Islam-kalooy, pagkamainantuson, ug pagkamatinud-anon- pinaagi sa akong mga lihok. Kini nga pamaagi dili lang nagpalig-on sa akong pagtuo apan usab nag-inspirar sa akong mga kaubang Blaan, nga nag- awhag kanila nga susihon ug sabton ang katahum sa Islam."

"Living a life that reflects the teachings of Allah is central to my daily existence. I aim to demonstrate the values of Islam-compassion, patience, and faithfulness-through my actions. This approach not only strengthens my faith but also serves as an inspiration to my co-Blaan, encouraging them to explore and understand the beauty of Islam".

Blaan convert 8: "Ang pagtrabaho sa usa ka komunidad nga kadaghanan dili Muslim usa ka hagit ug usa usab ka pribilehiyo kay aduna ko'y kahigayonan nga magkinabuhi nga uyon sa Islamiko nga pamaagi, kay daghan ang nagtan-aw kanako. Ang pagpuyo nga usa ka testimoniya sa imong pagtuo kang Allah usa ka pribilehiyo tungod kay nasayod ko nga usa ra ako ka instrumento. Ug ang pagkamainantuson (sabr) kinahanglan usab kay dili tanan makasabot sa imong bag-ong pagtuo.

Ang pagbaton og maayong ehemplo pinaagi sa pagpuyo sa mga pagtulon-an sa Qur'an nakatabang kanako nga magpakita sa positibong epekto sa Islam. Bisan pa sa mga hagit, ang pagtuo ug pagkamainantuson nagpalig-on sa akong determinasyon nga magpabilin nga matinud-anon sa akong

mga prinsipyo. Ang pagdumala sa mga pagsulay uban ang grasya ug kalma nagpakita sa akong mga kauban ug sa akong komunidad sa tinuod nga essence sa Islam.

Ang pagpuyo nga uyon sa mga prinsipyo sa Islam naghatag kanako og sentido sa kahingpitan ug katuyoan sa akong adlaw-adlaw nga kinabuhi. Kini nagpalig-on sa akong pagtuo ug naghatag kanako og oportunidad nga maghatag ug inspirasyon sa uban pinaagi sa akong mga buhat ug mga istorya."

"Being employed in a majority non-Muslim community is both challenging and a privilege because it gives me the honor to live an Islamic way of life under scrutiny. Living as a testimony to my faith in Allah is a privilege because I know I am just an instrument. Patience (Sabr) is also necessary, as not everyone will understand my newfound faith.

Setting a good example by living according to the teachings of the Qur'an helps me demonstrate the positive impact of Islam. Despite the challenges, faith and patience strengthen my determination to stay true to my principles. Managing trials with grace and calmness shows my colleagues and community the true essence of Islam.

Living according to Islamic principles gives me a sense of completeness and purpose in my daily life. It strengthens my faith and provides opportunities to inspire others through my actions and stories".

Blaan convert 9: "Ang pagtudlo sa Qur'an pinaagi sa dawah usa ka dakong kausaban sa akong kinabuhi kumpara sa akong pagtuo kaniadto nga Blaans nga wala motoo sa usa ka Dios (Tawhid).

Ang pagbag-o sa akong kinabuhi human nga nagdawat sa Islam dako kaayo. Ang mga prinsipyo ug pagtulon-an sa Qur'an naghatag kanako ug lig-on nga moral ug espirituhanong pundasyon. Kini dili lang nakapaayo sa akong personal nga kinabuhi apan naghatag usab kanako ug higayon nga mahimong positibong impluwensya sa mga tawo sa akong palibot. Pinaagi sa pagpahayag sa mga bili sa Islam, nagtinguha ko nga mahimong buhing testamento sa katahum ug kamatuoran sa pagtuo.

Ang pagtudlo sa Qur'an pinaagi sa dawah nahimo nga sentro sa akong kinabuhi. Kini naghatag kanako og higayon nga ibahin ang kaalam ug giya sa Islam ngadto sa uban, tabang kanila nga masabtan ang pagkausa sa Dios (Tawhid). Kini nga outreach naghatag kanako ug sentido sa katuyoan ug katagbawan, nga nasayod nga ako naghatag ug kontribusyon sa espirituhanon nga pagtubo sa akong komunidad."

"Teaching the Qur'an through dawah has been a significant change for me compared to when I was still a Blaans, not believing in the oneness of God (Tawhid).

The transformation in my life after embracing Islam has been profound. The principles and teachings of the Qur'an have provided me with a strong moral and spiritual foundation. This has not only improved my personal life but also allowed me to positively influence those around me. By embodying the values of Islam, I aim to be a living testimony to the beauty and truth of the faith.

Teaching the Qur'an through dawah has become a central part of my life. It allows me to share the wisdom and guidance of Islam with others, helping them understand the oneness of God (Tawhid). This outreach has given me a sense of purpose and fulfillment, knowing that I am contributing to the spiritual growth of my community."

Blaan convert 10: "Ang akong pagkamatuod nga magkinabuhi sa Islamiko nga paagi nagdala og dakong pagbag-o sa akong kinabuhi. Ang mga pagtulon-an sa Islam naghatag kanako og klaro nga moral nga pundasyon nga nagiya sa akong mga aksyon ug mga desisyon. Pinaagi sa pag-undang sa pagpanigarilyo ug paglikay sa sugal, napalambo ang akong kahimsog ug kahimsog, nga importante nga aspeto sa balaan nga kinabuhi."

"My commitment to living an Islamic way of life has brought about significant personal transformation. The teachings of Islam have provided me with a clear moral framework that guides my actions and decisions. By quitting smoking and avoiding gambling, I have improved my health and well-being, which are important aspects of a holy life".

Synthesis:

The collective experiences of the Blaan converts illustrate the transformative nature of faith and the significant influence of Islamic principles in their lives. Each account emphasizes distinct challenges and the extraordinary changes that emerged as they accepted Islam, guided by the teachings of the Qur'an.

For individuals like Convert 1 and Convert 2, embracing the principles of the Qur'an had a significant effect on their everyday existence and provided a structure for practicing their faith amidst non-Muslim communities. Converts 6 and 9 highlight how faith has influenced not only their personal development but also their roles as leaders and proponents of Islam, focusing on dawah and nurturing community.

Convert 7's narrative highlights the healing and sense of purpose discovered through faith, transforming personal battles like depression into a drive to guide and uplift others. Finally, convert 10's dedication to personal change-abandoning detrimental habits and remaining steadfast in a non-Muslim setting-demonstrates the strength of persistence and commitment to Islamic values.

Collectively, these stories highlight the significant effect of adhering to the Qur'an, illustrating how faith motivates personal growth, resilience, and a dedication to assisting others. They reveal the spiritual and community-oriented strength that is derived from accepting and embodying Islamic teachings.

Morados and Malayang (2023) in "Balik-Islam in Some Selected Areas in Luzon and the National Capital Region" examine the resilience of converts who navigate the complexities of their new religious identity while maintaining their commitment to Islamic principles.

Eder (2022) in "Converts to Islam and the Muslim Community in the Christian Philippines" discusses how the faithfulness and resilience of converts strengthen their communities and inspire others.

Faith and Heritage: Cultural Retention and Identity Negotiation Among Blaan Balik-Islam Adherents

The phenomenon of Balik-Islam among the Blaan people in General Santos City presents a compelling intersection of faith and heritage. As Indigenous individuals embrace Islam, they navigate a complex process of cultural retention and identity negotiation, balancing their ancestral traditions with the tenets of their new religious beliefs. This study examines how Blaan Balik-Islam adherents preserve their Indigenous identity while integrating Islamic practices, exploring the social, economic, and cultural shifts that accompany their religious transition.

Religious conversion is often accompanied by symbolic negotiation, where converts reinterpret their cultural heritage within the framework of their new faith (Acac, 2020). Among the Blaan, this negotiation manifests in ritual adaptations, linguistic shifts, and evolving community roles, shaping their engagement with both Indigenous and Islamic traditions. The study also considers interfaith dynamics, assessing how Balik-Islam adherents interact with both Muslim and non-Muslim communities in General Santos City.

By analyzing oral histories, ethnographic accounts, and community narratives, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of identity transformation among Blaan Balik-Islam adherents. It contributes to broader discussions on religious conversion, Indigenous cultural preservation, and intercultural dialogue, offering insights into the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous communities in the face of religious change.

Cultural Retention Amid Religious Transition

Maalim Amin (2025) discusses the retention of Islamic cultural values in the changing society, highlighting how converts reconcile pre-existing cultural traditions with their Islamic identity. His study, published in the *International Journal of Research*, provides insights into how religious

reversion influences cultural adaptation, particularly in contexts where Islam is not the dominant faith.

Similarly, Smith and Sikkink (2003) analyze social predictors of retention in and switching from the religious faith of family of origin. Their research in the Review of Religious Research examines how familial and communal influences shape religious identity across generations, offering relevant perspectives on the role of social structures in religious transition

Blaan convert 3: Samtang naglakaw ko sa akong bag-ong pagtuo ug naggakos sa Tawhid, buot nako ipahayag nga nagapadayon ko sa pagdala sa akong katribuang B'laan nga sinina bisan pa nga nagsuot ko sa akong hijab.

As I walk in my newfound faith and embrace Tawhid, I openly share that I still honor my Blaan heritage through my traditional clothing, even as I wear my hijab.

Blaan convert 5: Makita ninyo, nagsuot ko sa akong tradisyonal nga sinina sa B'laan uban sa akong hijab, kay nagtuo ko nga ang akong pagtuo lang ang nabag-o-nagapadayon gihapon ko sa pagpasidungog sa akong kultura. As you can see, I am wearing my Blaan traditional dress along with my hijab because, while I have embraced Tawhid, my faith is the only thing that has changed-I still honor my cultural heritage.

Blaan convert 6: Ako usa ka Blaan, nganong kinahanglan ko nga dili magsuot sa akong katribuang sinina? Sa akong pagsabot, ang Diyos nagatan-aw sa kasingkasing sa usa ka Muslim, dili sa iyang panamit.

I am Blaan, so why should I abandon my cultural heritage? As I understand it, God looks at the heart of a Muslim, not at their clothing."

The testimonies of Blaan Balik-Islam adherents reveal a profound negotiation between faith and heritage, illustrating that religious conversion does not necessitate cultural erasure. Each respondent highlights a commitment to preserving their Indigenous identity while fully embracing the principles of Tawhid. Through their statements, they assert that Islam is a matter of spiritual transformation, not a renouncement of ethnic heritage.

A recurring theme in these narratives is visible cultural expression- wearing traditional Blaan attire alongside the hijab. This act signifies a conscious blending of faith and identity, demonstrating that outward appearance does not define one's sincerity in worship. The respondents emphasize that Islam values the heart and devotion of a believer, rather than their clothing choices, reinforcing the idea that one's faith journey can coexist with ancestral traditions.

Additionally, their testimonies challenge cultural homogenization, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of what it means to be

Muslim in diverse Indigenous contexts. The Balik-Islam movement among the Blaan is not simply about religious conversion-it is also about cultural resilience, allowing adherents to navigate their evolving spiritual beliefs without losing the essence of who they are.

Theological Perspectives on Balik-Islam in GenSan

There isn't a widely documented peculiar teaching exclusive to Balik-Islam adherents in General Santos City, but studies suggest that their religious journey involves symbolic negotiation, where converts reinterpret their Indigenous identity within the framework of Islam (Acac, 2020).

Balik-Islam in the Philippines generally follows Sunni Islam, particularly the Shafi'i school of thought, which is dominant in Southeast Asia (Morados & Malayang, 2023). However, some Balik-Islam groups may integrate Sufi influences, emphasizing spiritual purification and personal devotion (Harunani & Ushama, 2024).

In General Santos City, Balik-Islam adherents often navigate cultural retention alongside their religious transformation. Many continue to wear traditional Blaan attire while embracing Islamic dress codes, reflecting a harmonization of faith and heritage (Franca, n.d.).

Islamization Theory Applied to the Blaan Community

The Islamization Theory provides a framework to understand the process by which individuals and communities adopt Islamic beliefs, practices, and identities, often influenced by historical, social, and cultural dynamics.

Influence of Islamic Teachings

The comprehensive framework of Islamic teachings resonates deeply with the Blaan community, providing ethical guidance and spiritual fulfillment. This aligns with Islamization Theory's emphasis on the structured introduction of religious principles as a transformative force.

The teachings of Islam were presented not just as abstract theology but as practical guidelines for a meaningful life, enabling the community to incorporate them into daily routines and cultural practices.

Role of Muslim Missionaries

The presence and active engagement of Muslim missionaries with the Blaan community are central to the Islamization process. By imparting religious knowledge, inspiring curiosity, and fostering relationships, these missionaries acted as conduits for the transmission of Islamic beliefs and practices.

Islamization Theory underscores the importance of religious educators and leaders in facilitating conversions, a dynamic reflected in your findings with figures like Blaan convert 1 and Blaan convert 6. These individuals embodied Islamic values and served as relatable examples of the faith's transformative potential.

Cultural Integration

Islamization Theory also explores how cultural practices evolve during the conversion process. For the Blaan, the adoption of Islamic rituals, halal dietary laws, and modest dress codes marked a significant cultural shift. These changes exemplify how Islamization is not only a spiritual journey but also a reconfiguration of cultural identity.

Findings highlight the community's resilience and adaptability in integrating Islamic beliefs while preserving their own cultural heritage, showcasing a nuanced interplay of tradition and religion.

Community Dynamics

Conversion is rarely an isolated event; it often involves broader community dynamics. The sense of belonging and solidarity that the Blaan experienced as part of the Muslim community reflects Islamization Theory's focus on the collective dimension of religious change.

The theory also considers how communal activities-such as shared religious practices and social gatherings-solidify the adoption of Islam and reinforce new social identities.

Key Takeaways

The Blaan's journey to Balik Islam illustrates the multi-dimensional nature of the Islamization Theory. It captures not just the dissemination of Islamic teachings but also their cultural integration, community impact, and the vital role of key figures and missionaries. The theory provides a robust lens to understand how the Blaan navigated their conversion process while adapting to new social and cultural realities.

CONCLUSION

Balik Islam individuals in General Santos City navigate a multifaceted and often challenging journey as they integrate their new religious identity within an environment shaped by social, cultural, economic, and security factors. Their experiences highlight the complexities of conversion, requiring a nuanced understanding of the broader socio-religious landscape and the distinct obstacles they face.

Challenges in Social Integration

The transition to Islam is not merely a shift in religious belief; it represents a profound transformation in cultural and social identity. Converts often grapple with balancing their past affiliations with their new faith, leading to a delicate process of integration within Muslim communities.

Established Muslim groups in General Santos City may approach converts with a mix of curiosity and skepticism, sometimes questioning their level of religious commitment or understanding of Islamic practices. This can create feelings of alienation and marginalization, as Balik Islam individuals struggle to find acceptance within their new religious environment.

Additionally, cultural differences further complicate integration. Many converts come from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds, requiring them to adapt to new customs, rituals, and societal expectations. Given that Islam in General Santos City is deeply intertwined with local traditions, newcomers must navigate both Islamic doctrine and the cultural nuances that shape Muslim identity in the region.

This process can be overwhelming, making community support and structured Islamic education essential in ensuring a smooth transition.

Economic Hardships and Financial Instability

Economic struggles compound the difficulties faced by Balik Islam individuals. Some converts experience financial instability due to societal shifts following their conversion, while others already face pre-existing economic challenges.

The broader economic landscape in General Santos City presents obstacles, particularly for those without established networks in the Muslim community. Without access to stable employment or financial assistance, converts may feel excluded from communal participation and religious activities.

Islamic charitable organizations play a vital role in addressing these hardships, yet limited awareness or accessibility can prevent Balik Islam individuals from fully benefiting from these support systems. Strengthening financial inclusion efforts within the Muslim community is crucial for ensuring economic stability among converts.

Security Concerns and Societal Prejudices

The socio-political climate in General Santos City has, at times, been marked by tensions and security challenges, which can disproportionately affect Balik Islam individuals. Converts may face prejudice or mistrust from both non-Muslim and Muslim groups, creating an environment of uncertainty.

In regions where sectarian divides or past conflicts influence community perceptions, Balik Islam adherents may encounter discrimination or social pressures, impacting their ability to practice their faith freely. Ensuring their safety and fostering an inclusive environment is essential for supporting their spiritual growth and well-being.

Limited Access to Islamic Education

A key challenge for Balik Islam individuals is acquiring a thorough understanding of Islamic teachings. Comprehensive religious knowledge is vital for converts to solidify their faith and integrate fully into the Muslim community.

However, Islamic educational resources remain scarce in certain areas, making it difficult for new adherents to receive structured religious

instruction. Without accessible learning opportunities, converts may struggle to develop confidence in their faith, affecting their ability to actively engage in Islamic practices and communal religious life.

Strengthening Islamic outreach, mentorship programs, and accessible religious education is essential in providing Balik Islam individuals with the necessary support for their spiritual journey.

Community Bonds and the Role of Social Networks

Despite these challenges, the study finds that the conversion experience of the Blaan people is rooted in a holistic transformation, integrating traditional values with Islamic principles. Familial ties, social networks, and guidance from religious role models serve as foundational elements in their transition.

This interconnection between cultural heritage and faith fosters stronger communal relationships, promotes mutual respect between indigenous and Muslim groups, and enriches the collective spiritual landscape of the region. While conversion presents opportunities for spiritual fulfillment and communal solidarity, it also demands significant adjustments in lifestyle, cultural norms, and social relations. The research highlights gaps in cultural reconciliation, Islamic education, and societal perceptions, which must be addressed through community engagement and educational outreach to facilitate lasting understanding and integration.

By enhancing economic stability, religious education, and community dialogue, Balik Islam individuals in General Santos City can overcome barriers and actively contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious religious and cultural landscape.

REFERENCES

Abu-Raiya, H., & Pargament, K. I. (2015). Empirical research on Islam and resilience. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 7(4), 259-271. <https://doi.org/XXXX>

Alfie D. Tubog. (2024). Educational experiences of the B'laan tribe: Identifying culturally responsive and contextual factors in learning. Retrieved from here.

Agbas, M. G. Z., Cenojas, L. A., Galvez, L. S., Ingilan, S. S., Ortiz, G. F., & Risonar, J. R. (2017). Disaster preparedness and climate change: The indigenous knowledge of selected IP groups in the Davao Region. University of Southeastern Philippines and The Office of Senator Loren B. Legarda. <https://tinyurl.com/4mwtukyx>

Ali, A. Y. (1998). *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. Amana Publications.

Amin, M. (2025). Retention of Islamic cultural values in a changing society: How converts reconcile pre-existing traditions with Islamic identity. *International Journal of Research*, Volume(Issue), Page Numbers. <https://doi.org/xxxx>

Anderson, P. (2023). The role of curiosity in religious conversions: Fostering understanding and reducing prejudice. *Journal of Interfaith Studies*, 34(2), 98- 112.

Angeles, V. S. M. (2009). *Moros in the media and beyond: Representations of the Philippine Muslim*. Springer Science Business Media B.V., 23.

Angeles, V. S. M. (2013). From Catholic to Muslim: Changing perceptions of gender roles in a Balik-Islam movement in the Philippines. In S. Schroter (Ed.), *Gender and Islam in Southeast Asia: Women's Rights Movements, Religious Resurgence and Local Traditions* (pp. 181-206). Brill.

Assmann, J. (2008). Communicative and cultural memory. In *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (pp. 109-118). <https://archiv.ub.uniheidelberg.de/propylaeumdok>

Asian Studies. (2010). *Islam and Philippine society: The writings of Cesar Adib Majul*. <https://www.asj.upd.edu.ph/index.php/archive>

Asiawaves.net. (2022). Radio stations in South Cotabato Province, Philippines. <https://www.asiawaves.net/philippines/south-cotabato-radio.htm>

Baer, D. M. (2014). History and religious conversion. Oxford Handbooks Online.

Banaggia, G. (2010). In conversion, with versions: Exploring models of religious conversion.

Barker, E. (2014). The not-so-new religious movements: Changes in 'the cult scene' over the past forty years. *Temenos - Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*, 50(2), 235-256. <https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.48461>

Becker, C. H. (1909). Christianity and Islam (H. J. Chaytor, Trans.). Plymouth College. Retrieved from <https://www.agathonlibrary.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Becker-Carl-Heinrich-Christianity-and-Islam-Carl-Heinrich-Becker.pdf>

Bell, S. (2009). Anti-semitic folklore motif index. All Graduate Theses and Dissertations, p. 299.

Beunbound. (2023). Self-Discovery Re-Examined: How Community Helps Us Understand Ourselves.

Bowen, P. D. (2009). Conversion to Islam in the United States: A case study in Denver, Colorado. *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies*, 1(1), 2- 42.

Boland, C. (2020). Hybrid identity and practices to negotiate belonging: Madrid's Muslim youth of migrant origin. *Comparative Migration Studies*.

Bresnahan, M. I. (1979). English in the Philippines. *Journal of Communication*, 29(2), 64-71.

Bulliet, R. W. (1979). Conversion to Islam in the medieval period. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Buisson, J. M. (2017). Muslim women: Crosscurrent association for religion and intellectual life. University of North Carolina Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26605775>

Cambridge International Law Journal. (2021). Indigenous identity and cultural rights. Retrieved April 24, 2025, from
<https://www.elgaronline.com/view/journals/cilj/10-2/cilj.2021.02.01.xml>

Clark, J. (2021). Blaan beliefs and mythology: Understanding indigenous spirituality in Mindanao. The Aswang Project.
Retrieved from

<https://www.aswangproject.com/philippine-mythology/mindanao-mythologies-beliefs/blaan-beliefs/>

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Social support theory: The presence of supportive relationships can significantly affect an individual's well-being and their ability to navigate life changes. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310-357.

Cox, N. (2012). Religion and law. Theos. London. ISBN 978-0-9562182-8-5
Cole, F.-C. (1913). The wild tribes of Davao district, Mindanao. Field Museum of Natural History Publication 170. Anthropological series 12(2). Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History.

Cole, M. C. (1916). Philippine folk tales. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co.

Corpuz, J. C. G. (2025). Toward grassroots interfaith dialogue: The role of a faith-based movement. *Religions*, 16(3), 345.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030345>

Dalton, G. (1971). Economic progress and cultural modernization. Princeton University Press.

Demetrio, F. R. (Ed.). (1975). Dialogue for development: Papers from the first national congress of Philippine folklore and other scholars, Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro, December 27-30, 1972 (No. 28). Xavier University.

Demetrio, F. R. (1979). From the Grimm Brothers to Heda Jason: An overview of folkloristics. *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 7(1/2), 3-50.

Dino, N., Guinto-Sali, M. J., Matolo, A. H. L., Amat, A., & Ingilan, S. (2023). Uncovering the unsung hero of Sulu: Panglima Sayyad's character archetypes in *kissa*. *Southeastern Philippines Journal of Research and Development*, 28(1), 49-68. <https://doi.org/10.53899/spjrd.v28i1.248>

Dennett, D. C. (1950). *Conversion and the poll tax in early Islam*. Harvard University Press. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/conversionpollta0000dani>

Dube, S. (1990). *Cultural issues affecting economic development in India*. Oxford University Press.

Eaton, R. M. (1996). *The rise of Islam and the Bengal frontier*. University of California Press. Vol(1204-1760), 108-109.

Eder, J. F. (2022). Converts to Islam and the Muslim Community in the Christian Philippines. *Contemporary Islam*, 16(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-022-00478-6>

Eder, J. F., & Makhani-Belkin, E. (2022). Converts to Islam and the Muslim community in the Christian Philippines. In E. R. Assmann, A. Majul, & J. Gueguen (Eds.), *Religious Conversion and Intercultural Relations*.

Einhorn, D. (1870). *The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia*. The Jewish Times. <https://www.studylight.org/encyclopedias/eng/tje/m/mixed-marriage.html>

Esack, F. (1997). *The Qur'an: A user's guide*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Eugenio, D. L. (Ed.). (2007). *Philippine folk literature: An anthology* (Vol. 1). University of the Philippines Press.

Forrester, D. (1977). *Religious conversion and social change*. Cambridge University Press.

Gandhi, M. K. (n.d.). Mahatma Gandhi's perspective on losing oneself in the service of others. Retrieved from Gandhi's writings.

Gaspar, K. (2016). No end to Lumad dislocation from their homeland: The case of the Sarangani Manobo and Blaans in Davao Occidental. *Academia.edu*. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/82865781>

Geertz, C. (1975). *Religion as a cultural system*. Yale University Press.

General Santos City, 19th Sangguniang Panlungsod. (2022, December 3). <http://www.spgensantos.ph/>

Gooren, H. (2010). *Tracing patterns of change in faith practices. Religious conversion and disaffiliation*. ISBN: 978-0-230-11303-9, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230113039>

Goshen-Gottstein, A. (2014). *The religious other: Hostility, hospitality, and the hope of human flourishing*. Lexington Books.

Gloria, H. K. (2005). *The Blaan people and their origins: Cultural studies of Central Mindanao*. National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Retrieved April 24, 2025, from <https://ncca.gov.ph>

Gueguen, J. (2010). *Sacredness, Death and Landscapes among the Blaan (Mindanao): A Cultural Geography Study*.

Gülen, F. (2008). *Spiritual leader in a global Islamic context*. Rumi Forum. Retrieved from <https://rumiform.org/spiritual-leader-in-a-global-islamic-context/>.

Harmon, J. (2023). Skepticism in religious conversion: Motivations and authenticity. *Journal of Religious Studies*, 28(4), 215-230.

Hawwa, S. (1999). *Religious conversion of Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong*. ISIM Newsletter. ISIM, Leiden. <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17350>

History.com Editors. (2010, February 17). *September 11 attacks: Facts, background & impact*. HISTORY. Retrieved April 24, 2025, from <https://www.history.com/articles/9-11-attacks>

Hodgson, M. G. S. (1993). *Rethinking world history: Essays on Europe, Islam, and world history* (E. Burke III, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://www.academia.edu/124918435>

Intermarriage. (2022, December 15). *Jewish Encyclopedia*. <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10889-mixed-marriage>

IslamQA. (2023). *Principles of interacting with non-Muslims: Emphasizing moderation, kindness, and justice*. Retrieved from IslamQA.

Islam, M. Z. (2014). Interfaith marriage in Islam and present situation. *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, 2, 36-47.

Johnson, R. L. (2024). Emotional and social hurdles in significant life changes: The role of perseverance. *Journal of Psychological Transitions*, 12(3), 145- 160.

Jindra, I. W. (2023). Gender, symbolic and social boundaries, and deconversion from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. *Sociology of Religion*.

Johnson, M. M. (2014). Born and 'Balik' Islam in the Kingdom: Religious submission, spiritual economies and national belonging among Filipino Muslim migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. Paper presented at the Philippine Studies Conference of Japan, Kyoto.

Kammerer, C. (1990). *Religious transformation and cultural resistance*. Harvard University Press.

Karl, M. (1969). *Selected writing in sociology and social philosophy*. (T. B. Bottomore, Trans.). London: McGraw Hill Book. ISBN-10: 0070406723
Katznelson, I., & Rubin, M. (2016). *Religious conversion: History, experience, and meaning*. <https://www.routledge.com/Religious-Conversion-History-Experience-and-Meaning/Katznelson-Rubin/p/book/9781472421494>

Khalil, M. H., & Bilici, M. (2007). Conversion out of Islam: A study of conversion narratives of former Muslims. *The Muslim World*, 121.

Knitter, P. F. (2002). *Introducing theologies of religions*. Orbis Books. ISBN-13: 978-1570754197.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/additional-info#history>

Köse, A. (1996). *Conversion to Islam: A study of native British converts*. Kegan Paul International. London. ISBN: 071030546X, 9780710305466

Lacar, L. Q. (1972). Muslim-Christian marriages in the Philippines: Some tentative generalizations (MSU-IIT). *Philippine Sociological Society*, 33(1/2), 77-83. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23898269>

Lacar, L. Q. (2001). Balik-Islam: Christian converts to Islam in the Philippines,

c. 1970-1998. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 12(1), 39-60.

Leacock, E. (1980). *Social structures and religious change*. Stanford University Press.

Lofland, J., & Stark, R. (1965). Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective. *American Sociological Review*, 30(6), 862-875.

Maass, A., & Clark, R. III. (1986). Conversion theory and simultaneous majority/minority influence: Can reactance offer an alternative explanation?. 16(3), 305-309. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2420160307

Maalim Amin, A. (2025). Retention of Islamic cultural values in the changing society. *International Journal of Research*, 12(4). Retrieved from IJR Journal Majul, C. A. (1973). *Muslims in the Philippines*. University of the Philippines Press, Diliman, Quezon City. ISBN 971-542-188-1

Majul, C. A. (1999). *Muslims in the Philippines*. University of the Philippines Press.

Malik, A. H. (2013). Tracing the genesis of conversion: The role of Sufi missionaries in the Islamization of Kashmir. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 3(6), 1-6. <https://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0613/ijsrp-p1846.pdf>

Mendoza, L. C. (2022). Cultural resistance to religious conversion: The impact on social dynamics. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Studies*, 29(3), 187-202.

Mens, S. M. (2004). Socio-economic impact of religious conversion: Case study of a tribal village in Manipur. *The Oriental Anthropologist: A Bi-annual International Journal of the Science of Man*, 4(2), 212-221. DOI: 10.1177/0976343020040211

Menzies, A. (2009). *History of religion: A sketch of primitive religious beliefs and practices, and of the origin and character of the great systems*. Project Gutenberg. Oxford University Press. p.60. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/29893>

Mills, K., & Grafton, A. (2003). *Conversion in late antiquity and the early middle ages*. University of Rochester Press. p.7. ISBN: 1580461255, 9781580461252

Morados, M. A., & Malayang, A. F. (2023). *Balik-Islam in some selected areas in Luzon and the National Capital Region: Motivations of conversion and challenges encountered*.
https://cids.up.edu.ph/discussion_paper/balik-islam-selected-areas-luzon-national-capital-region-motivations-conversion-challenges-encountered/

Mumtaz Ali Khan, M. (1977). *Religious conversion and economic mobility*. Routledge.

Nasr, S. H. (2002). *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*. HarperOne.

National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. (n.d.). *Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines*. Retrieved from <https://ncip.gov.ph>

National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). (2024). *Tackling the challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples*. Retrieved from <https://ncip.gov.ph/news/tackling-the-challenges-faced-by-indigenous-peoples/>

Ordinario, C. (2019). *Poverty and economic challenges in the Philippines*. Business Mirror.

Owen, J. (2025). *Exploring the traditional knowledge and cultural practices of the Blaan people in Kiblawan, Davao del Sur*. Academia.edu. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/127034149>

Oxford Academic. (2013). *Justice and fairness in dealings with non-Muslims as outlined in the Qur'an*. Retrieved from Oxford Academic.

Özyürek, E. (2014). *Race, religion, and conversion in new Europe*. Princeton University Press. p.5. ISBN 9780691162782

Perez, J. M. (2019). *Greed and grievances: A discursive study on the evolution of the Lumad struggle in Mindanao, 2010-2019*. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(3), 41-52. <https://doi.org/10.29333/EJECS/254>

Pogado, E. G., & Bagtas, L. R. (2024). Lessons from Narratives of Blaans Learners. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 21(8), 899- 915. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.12690044.

Pop, M. R., & Pop, C. M. (2024). Antecedents and perceived benefits of religious conversion: An exploratory study within a Protestant congregation. *Religions*, 15(2), 156. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15020156>

Rambo, L. R. (1993). *Understanding religious conversion*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp.1-5

Quintanilla, S. R. (2007). *History of early stone sculpture at Mathura: Ca. 150 BCE - 100 CE*. BRILL. ISBN 9789004155374.

Rasul, A. (2009). *Radicalization of Muslims in Mindanao: The Philippines in Southeast Asian context*. The Henry L. Stimson Center. Washington, DC. ISBN: 978-0-9821935-1-8

Rambo, L. R., & Farhadian, C. E. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of religious conversion*. Oxford University Press. p.2. ISBN: 9780199984596. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195338522.001.0001>

Ramora, R. (2014). Prominent Filipino Muslim preachers to discuss Islam at Dubai World Trade Centre. [https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/prominent-filipino-muslim-preachers-to-discuss-islam-at-dubai-world-trade-centre- 1.601385](https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/prominent-filipino-muslim-preachers-to-discuss-islam-at-dubai-world-trade-centre-1.601385)

Religion and Gender (2022). Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11562-022-00478-6>.

Republic of the Philippines. (1997). *Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (RA 8371)*. Retrieved from https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1997/ra_8371_1997.html

Rodil, B. R. (1993). *The minoritization of the indigenous communities of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago*. Mindanao State University Press.

Romesh, R., & Venkata, P. (2004). *Religion and economic structures: A sociological analysis*. Cambridge University Press.

Saleeby, N. M. (1908). *The history of Sulu*. <http://www.pgdp.net/> for Project Gutenberg

Sebastian, R., & Parameswaran, A. (2007). Conversional and family: Chinese Hare Krishnas. *Journal of Contemporary*, 22(3), 341-359.

Sherkat, D. E. (1997). Highlighting that social ties to religious individuals increase the likelihood of conversion. *Social Forces*, 76(1), 793-823.

Singh, M., & Venkata, R. P. (2004). Socio-economic impact of religious conversion: Case study of a tribal village in Manipur. *The Oriental Anthropologist: A Bi-annual International Journal of the Science of Man*, 4(2), 212-221. doi:10.1177/0976343020040211

Sinaunang Panahon. (n.d.). Faith in flux: Religious changes under American rule in the Philippines. Retrieved from <https://sinaunangpanahon.com/faith-in-flux-religious-changes-under-american-rule-in-the-philippines>

Sintang, S., & Hambali, K. M. (2011). Conference: International Conference on Behavioral, Cognitive and Psychological Sciences. Vol. 23. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/253239476>

Smelser, N. (1963). Social change and religious transformation. University of California Press.

Snook, D. W., Williams, M. J., & Horgan, J. G. (2019). Issues in the sociology and psychology of religious conversion. *Pastoral Psychology*, 68(3), 223-240. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-018-0841-1>

Smith, J. A. (2023). The impact of passive rejection on social integration. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 45(2), 123-135.

Smith, C., & Sikkink, D. (2003). Social predictors of retention in and switching from the religious faith of family of origin: Another look using religious tradition self-identification. *Review of Religious Research*, 45(2), 188-206. Retrieved from JSTOR

Simonsohn, U. (2013). Conversion to Islam: A case study for the legal sources. John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 11(7). <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12075>

Syed, M. U. (2017). Coercion and responsibility in Islam: A study in ethics and law. Oxford University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2010). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In T. Postmes & N. R. Branscombe (Eds.), *Rediscovering social identity* (pp.

173-190). Psychology Press. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-11535-008>

The Aswang Project. (2016). Mythology: B'laan ethnic group, Mindanao. <https://www.aswangproject.com/mythodology-blaan-mindanao/>

The New Lexicon Webster. (1992). Encyclopedic dictionary of the English language. Communicative Lexicon Publications Inc. p.198. ISBN: 0717245465, 9780717245468

Thompson, E. L. (2023). Navigating acceptance and resistance in religious conversions: Social support and identity conflicts. *Journal of Religious and Cultural Studies*, 47(1), 67-83.

Trocio, J. V. et al. / *Southeastern Philippines Journal of Research and Development*, 28(2), 13-25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53899/spjrd.v28i2.253>

Trocio, J., Campos, R., & Yu, A. L. (2023). Cultural motifs in Blaan flalok: Revitalization of oral lore for preservation, development, and sustainability.

Southeastern Philippines Journal of Research and Development. Retrieved from https://journal.usep.edu.ph/index.php/Southeastern_Philippines_Journal/article/download/253/85

Turner, J. (1974). Blaan Culture from the 2005 Indigenous Peoples Development Program Cultural Research with Dr. Heidi K. Gloria. Retrieved from here.

Wadi, J. (2010). Tadem, E. C. (Ed.). Introduction - Islam and Philippine society: The writings of Cesar Adib Majul. *Asian Studies*. Quezon City, Philippines: Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman, 46(1-2). ISSN 0004-4679

Watanabe, A. (2008). Migration and mosques: The evolution and transformation of Muslim communities in Manila, the Philippines. *Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Working Paper Series No. 37*. Shiga, Japan.

Williams, G. A. (2016). The impact of conversion to Islam on psychological well-being: An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of four Muslim women's experiences.

Worsely, P. (1957). Religious conversion and community dynamics. Oxford University Press.

Yoshizawa, A., & Kusaka, W. (2020). The arts of everyday peacebuilding: Cohabitation, conversion, and intermarriage of Muslims and Christians in the Southern Philippines. *Southeast Asian Studies*, 9(1), 67-97. https://doi.org/10.20495/seas.9.1_67

Young, J. E. (2002). *At memory's edge: After-images of the Holocaust in contemporary art and architecture*. Yale University Press

Yu, A. L. (2023). *Blaan oral traditions and their role in indigenous knowledge transmission*. Academia.edu. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/110478661>

Zebiri, Kate .(2007).*British Muslim Converts: Choosing Alternative Live*.Oxford One world. pp 2-3. ISBN-10:1851685464,ISBN-13:978-1851685462.

Zebiri, K. (2008). *British Muslim converts: Choosing alternative lives*.Oneworld