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Catholic Priests' Perception of Islamic Practices on Moral and Ethical Formation in Kitale, Kenya

Kiprono Cheruiyot David and Joyzy Pius Egunjobi

Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

ABSTRACT

This empirical qualitative study explored Catholic priests' perceptions of Islamic spiritual practices, including Salat (prayer), Sawm (fasting), Zakat (almsgiving), and Dhikr (remembrance of God), with particular attention to the biases that influenced these perceptions and their implications for moral and ethical formation. Guided by four objectives, the study sought to: (1) examine Catholic priests' perceptions of Islamic spiritual practices, (2) identify types of biases held by Catholic priests regarding these practices, (3) explore the perceived contribution of Islamic practices to moral and ethical formation, and (4) recommend strategies for mitigating such biases within pastoral contexts. The study employed a qualitative survey design to capture the perceptions, experiences, and reflections of Catholic priests serving within the Catholic Diocese of Kitale, Kenya. A purposive sample of eight priests engaged in pastoral and interfaith work was selected to ensure depth and relevance of insight. Data were collected through semi-structured, open-ended survey interviews, allowing participants to articulate their perspectives freely. The data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework to identify patterns, meanings, and underlying assumptions. Trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking, peer debriefing, and maintenance of an audit trail, consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability. The study revealed that Catholic priests demonstrated both an appreciation for the moral and ethical depth of Islamic spiritual practices and an awareness of subtle biases shaped by theological gaps, limited exposure, cultural influences, and media portrayals. The findings contributed to pastoral theology, interfaith dialogue, and religious education by providing insights and strategies to promote mutual respect, strengthen interreligious understanding, and enhance ethical awareness within Kenya's pluralistic religious context.

Background of the Study

Religious practices are widely recognized as central to moral and ethical formation, shaping both individual behavior and communal life (Graham & Haidt, 2010). Within the context of interfaith engagement, Catholic perspectives on Islamic spiritual practices remain underexplored, particularly regarding how these practices influence moral development. Islamic practices such as Salat (prayer), Sawm (fasting), Zakat (almsgiving), and Dhikr (remembrance of God) are often perceived, especially by outsiders, as primarily ritualistic activities rather than as embodied pathways toward moral and ethical growth (Bunmi, 2019). This perception may inadvertently reflect biases shaped by religious, cultural, and doctrinal differences.

In Catholic contexts, spiritual formation emphasizes virtues such as charity, justice and holiness, cultivated through sacraments, prayer, and pastoral guidance. Consequently, Catholic clergy may hold preconceived notions about the transformative potential of non-Christian practices (Martin, 2021). Understanding these perceptions is critical for promoting interfaith dialogue, mutual respect, and pastoral strategies that foster ethical awareness across religious boundaries.

Globally, research has consistently shown that spiritual disciplines across diverse religious traditions foster virtues such as compassion, justice, honesty, self-discipline and social responsibility (Smith & Kim, 2020; Ali & Daud, 2022). These practices serve as structured mechanisms through which individuals internalize moral values and translate them into ethical behavior, influencing both personal development and social interactions. In Islam, practices such as Salat (prayer), Sawm (fasting), Zakat (almsgiving), and Dhikr (remembrance of God) are not only acts of devotion but also intentional processes that shape moral character and ethical consciousness (Ramadan, 2017; O'Collins, 2014). For instance, Salat, performed five times daily, encourages reflection, mindfulness, and accountability, fostering discipline and moral integrity. Sawm, practiced during Ramadan, cultivates empathy, self-control, and solidarity with the marginalized. Zakat institutionalizes charity as a moral duty, promoting social justice and equitable distribution of resources. Similarly, Dhikr nurtures continual ethical awareness and conscious engagement with moral responsibilities toward God and fellow human beings.

Despite these demonstrated moral and ethical dimensions, non-Muslim observers, including scholars and religious leaders from other faith traditions, often interpret Islamic practices narrowly as rigid rituals or formalistic obligations (Bhat, 2024). Such perceptions may arise from limited understanding of Islamic theology, ethnocentric viewpoints, or comparative biases rooted in one's own religious framework. These assumptions risk overlooking the transformative potential of Islamic spiritual disciplines, leading to undervaluation of their role in shaping ethical and social behavior (Khanom et al. 2024). Critically examining these perceptions is therefore essential, not only to reveal the depth and intentionality of Islamic moral formation but also to

challenge and reflect on the biases that influence interreligious understanding. Doing so provides a foundation for more informed, respectful, and nuanced engagement across faith communities, highlighting the need for research that examines these dynamics through both empirical observation and reflective inquiry.

Regionally, in African contexts, Islamic spiritual practices have been shown to promote communal cohesion, ethical behavior, and socio-religious responsibility (Abubakar, 2019; Ssekajja, 2021). Practices such as communal prayer, fasting during Ramadan, and charitable giving strengthen social solidarity, foster mutual accountability, and encourage ethical conduct within communities (Faris et al. 2025). These practices shape moral attitudes, guide decision-making, and cultivate justice and compassion among adherents. However, limited empirical research exists on how Christian communities, particularly Catholic clergy, perceive these practices. Often, Catholic leaders may interpret Islamic rituals through the lens of their own theological and moral frameworks, leading to assumptions that these practices are primarily formalistic or less transformative (Jeniva & Tanyid, 2025). Investigating these perceptions is therefore critical for identifying biases, promoting informed interfaith perspectives, and enhancing collaborative approaches to moral and ethical formation in African societies.

Locally, in Kenya, Catholic priests frequently interact with diverse Muslim communities, particularly in urban centers and regions with significant interfaith engagement. Nonetheless, research examining how these clergy perceive Islamic spiritual disciplines remains scarce (Rugar, 2020). Existing literature indicates that Catholic priests may hold preconceived notions that Islamic practices are more ritualistic and less morally transformative compared to Christian spiritual practices (Mwangi, 2020; Ochieng, 2018). Such assumptions can influence pastoral attitudes, interfaith dialogue and ethical engagement with Muslim communities.

Understanding these perceptions is critical for identifying personal and institutional biases, expanding appreciation of diverse spiritual practices, and promoting mutual respect, interfaith learning, and ethical awareness across religious boundaries in Kenya's pluralistic society. By investigating these dynamics, the study will illuminate both the moral significance of Islamic practices and the ways in which biases shape interfaith understanding, ultimately informing strategies for more inclusive and reflective pastoral practice.

This study, therefore, investigates Catholic priests' perceptions of Islamic spiritual practices and their influence on moral and ethical formation, while critically reflecting on the researcher's initial bias that Islamic spirituality is less morally formative than Christian spirituality. Exploring these perceptions in global, regional, and local contexts will contribute to a nuanced understanding of interfaith moral and ethical formation and inform pastoral approaches that foster dialogue, learning, and collaboration in pluralistic societies.

Personal and Theological Bias as Motivation for the Study

When interacting with non-Christian religious traditions, researchers from a Christian especially Catholic background frequently acknowledge that their theology training may expose them to unconscious prejudices. Catechetical training, ecclesial teachings and cultural narratives that emphasize Christian frameworks for comprehending spiritual experience can all contribute to these biases (Phan, 2017; Schmidt-Leukel, 2019). In order to preserve academic integrity and advance genuine interreligious understanding, it is imperative that this reality be acknowledged.

Catholic scholars thus approach the study with an attitude of epistemic humility, purposefully challenging their own preconceptions and biases in the context of engaging Islamic spiritual practices. They critically analyze ingrained stereotypes, such as believing that Islamic rites are only formalistic or lack theological depth, and attempt to reinterpret them through knowledgeable compassionate investigation. This is where reflexivity becomes crucial (Cornille, 2013). This procedure is in line with the larger Catholic commitment to dialogue, which promotes gaining knowledge from diverse religious traditions while maintaining a firm grasp of one's own theology.

Researchers hope to gain a more complex knowledge of Islamic religiosity by examining Islamic spiritual practices via lived experience, observation and discussion. The spirit of *Nostra Aetate* (Vatican II), which exhorts Catholics to "recognize, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods" contained in other religious traditions, is in line with this strategy (Vatican Council II, 1965). Researchers can better grasp the moral and spiritual goals ingrained in Islamic life by viewing customs like Salat, Sawm, Zakat, and Dhikr as manifestations of a universal human quest for purity, justice, and compassion.

Additionally, modern Catholic theological concepts that emphasize reciprocal change through dialogue are consistent with the search for common moral ground across traditions (O'Collins, 2016; Race & Knitter, 2011). Therefore, studying Islamic spiritual practices is a pastoral and theological endeavor as well as an intellectual one. In increasingly pluralistic cultures like Kenya, it enables Catholic researchers to foster interreligious respect, improve moral development and strengthen pastoral ministry and in the end, researchers want to dispel prejudice, broaden their knowledge of Islam and promote a more peaceful and morally sound coexistence by locating their research within both self-critical reflection and the Church's magisterial teaching on interreligious interaction.

Problem Statement

In increasingly pluralistic societies, interfaith understanding is essential for peaceful coexistence, social cohesion, and effective pastoral engagement. While theological dialogues between Islam and Christianity have grown over the past decades, there is a notable lack of empirical research exploring how Islamic spiritual disciplines such as Salat (prayer), Sawm (fasting), Zakat (almsgiving) and Dhikr (remembrance of God) contribute to moral and ethical formation from a Catholic pastoral perspective (Ali & Daud, 2022). Much of the existing literature emphasizes doctrinal comparison, apologetics,

or theological critique, often neglecting the lived experiences of adherents and the practical implications of Islamic spirituality for moral behavior (Ramadan, 2017; O'Collins, 2014).

A significant concern is the prevalence of preconceived biases among Catholic clergy, who may perceive Islamic practices as primarily ritualistic rather than morally or ethically transformative. The researcher's personal bias, initially viewing Islamic spirituality as formalistic, mirrors this broader gap in theological scholarship and pastoral understanding (Mwangi, 2020; Ochieng, 2018). Such biases may influence pastoral attitudes, limit interfaith engagement, and obscure recognition of the ethical contributions of Islamic spiritual practices.

This study, situated within the Kitale Archdiocese in Kenya, aims to explore how Islamic spiritual disciplines foster moral and ethical consciousness among Muslim adherents and how Catholic priests perceive these practices in light of their own biases. The Kitale Archdiocese, comprising the counties of Trans-Nzoia and West Pokot, has a Catholic population of approximately 315,270, representing 15.1% of the total population of 2,093,000 (Catholic Diocese of Kitale, 2023). In contrast, Muslims constitute about 10.9% of Kenya's total population, with significant concentrations in counties such as Mandera, Wajir, Garissa and Kwale (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The presence of Muslim communities in close proximity to Catholic populations in regions like Kitale underscores the importance of fostering interfaith understanding and dialogue.

By addressing this gap, the research aims to contribute to comparative theology, pastoral practice and interreligious dialogue, providing evidence-based insights that can enhance mutual understanding, reduce prejudice and promote ethical awareness across religious communities.

Research Objectives

This study is guided by the following objectives:

- I. To examine the perception of Catholic priests on Islamic spiritual practices such as Salat, Sawm, Zakat and Dhikr
- II. To find out types of biases held by catholic priests about Islamic spiritual practices
- III. To explore how the Islamic spiritual practices contribute to the moral and ethical formation of adherents from the Catholic priests' perspective.
- IV. To mitigate how the biases held by catholic priests on the Islamic spiritual practices

Research Questions

- I. How do Catholic priests perceive Islamic spiritual practices such as Salat, Sawm, Zakat and Dhikr?
- II. What types of biases do Catholic priests hold regarding Islamic spiritual practices?
- III. How do Catholic priests perceive the role of Islamic spiritual practices in shaping the moral and ethical development of Muslim adherents?
- IV. What strategies can be recommended to mitigate biases held by Catholic priests toward Islamic spiritual practices?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative survey design to explore the Catholic priests' perceptions of Islamic spiritual practices and the biases that may influence their understanding of moral and ethical formation. Conducted in the Catholic Diocese of Kitale in western Kenya, the study purposively sampled 8 Catholic priests from eight parishes engaged in pastoral and interfaith activities. To safeguard confidentiality, each parish has been assigned a coded name; Parish Alpha, Parish Beta, Parish Gamma, Parish Delta, Parish Epsilon, Parish Zeta, Parish Eta, and Parish Theta. These parishes vary in pastoral contexts, demographic composition, and levels of interfaith engagement, allowing for a broad representation of priests' perceptions of Islamic spiritual practices. Data were collected through semi-structured interview surveys featuring open-ended questions on Islamic practices such as Salat (prayer), Sawm (fasting), Zakat (almsgiving), and Dhikr (remembrance of God). Each interview which lasted 45–60 minutes, was recorded with consent of the priest. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify recurring themes and patterns. The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. This approach will provide an in-depth understanding of how Catholic priests in Kitale perceive Islamic spiritual practices and how these perceptions influence pastoral engagement and interfaith dialogue.

Findings

This section outlines the findings derived from a qualitative survey conducted with Catholic priests across eight parishes in the Catholic Diocese of Kitale. The analysis incorporates perspectives from priests serving in Parishes Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Zeta, Eta, Sigma and Epsilon. Their narratives clarify the understanding, interpretation, and integration of Islamic spiritual practices within their pastoral reflections.

Demographic information

The participants ranged from early thirties to nearly sixty years of age, with priestly experience spanning from five to over twenty years. All respondents possessed theological training, with several holding additional qualifications in pastoral ministry or social sciences. Priests from Parish Alpha, Parish Beta, Parish Delta, and Parish Eta reported extensive interfaith engagement, while those from Parish Epsilon and Parish Theta, which are situated in more rural settings, reported limited interactions with Muslim communities.

Languages commonly used in interreligious encounters included English, Kiswahili, and local dialects as Bukusu, Sabiny, Koony and Bongoomek, depending on the parish context. Priests from Parish Zeta and Parish Gamma indicated that their communities were religiously mixed, containing a significant Muslim presence.

Perceptions of Islamic Spiritual Practices

In general, Catholic priests in the Diocese of Kitale expressed admiration for the structure, discipline, and ethical foundation that are present in Islamic rituals. These rituals include Salat, Sawm, Zakat, and Dhikr. Participants from each of the eight parishes emphasised the intentionality and moral relevance of these practices, recognising both their power to foster self-regulation, social responsibility, and spiritual reflection and highlighting the fact that these practices are purposeful.

In Parish Alpha, a priest characterised Salat as "the fixed rhythm of prayer embeds self-regulation and moral recall into ordinary routines." He emphasised that structured prayer helps to foster mindfulness and constant ethical thinking. Similarly, a priest from Parish Beta, underscored the distributive ethic of Zakat, explaining that "mandatory giving reduces performative charity and routinizes communal care," thereby acknowledging the ethical dimensions of wealth redistribution and social solidarity.

One priest from Parish Gamma, made the observation that the liturgical discipline that is developed from childhood "becomes a template for integrity," which can be seen in both personal behaviour and relationships with members of the community. Fasting is framed as a lived pedagogical practice that promotes moral perspective-taking and empathy for marginalised groups, according to a priest who is working in Parish Delta. This priest explained that Sawm "intensifies awareness of social asymmetries and builds affective empathy towards economic vulnerability."

Because of the contemplative resonance it possessed, the meditative practice of Dhikr stood out as exceptionally valuable. A priest from Parish Zeta reflected that Dhikr "mirrors Christian contemplative repetition by training attention, lowering affective reactivity, and inducing interior ethical audit." This exemplifies the similarities that exist between the practices of sustained, focused prayer in the Christian and Islamic traditions. Within the context of Parish Eta, a priest made the observation that Salat "functions as a daily ethical checkpoint that interrupts automatic decision-making, enabling moral recalibration." This observation highlights the role that Salat plays in developing contemplative and intentional ethical behaviour.

A number of other priests came to the same conclusion, recognising the social and ethical aspects of Islamic ceremonies. Zakat was described as "a socio-religious equaliser that normalises obligation over discretion, strengthening community ethics" by a priest from Parish Sigma. In conclusion, a priest from Parish Epsilon acknowledged the moral potential of Islamic practices. However, he emphasised the significance of direct engagement, stating that "ethical insight is harder to form without sustained exposure to practicing communities, leaving interpretation more text-bound than contact-informed."

These anecdotes, taken as a whole, suggest that there is a widespread knowledge among Catholic clergy of the moral and ethical sophistication that is entrenched in Islamic spiritual practices. Not only are Salat, Sawm, Zakat, and Dhikr seen to be ritualistic requirements, but they are also seen as deliberate methods for promoting discipline, empathy, social responsibility, and spiritual growth throughout communities. This is emphasised by the reflections.

Types of Biases Held by Catholic Priests

Participants reported a number of elements that contributed to partial understandings of Islamic spiritual activities or biases in their understanding of such practices. The effect of the media has arisen as a significant concern, with priests pointing out that coverage frequently places an emphasis on radicalism, ceremonial formalism, or extremism, so moulding perceptions prior to any real involvement with Muslim populations (Pew Research Centre, 2017). The subtle ways in which media depictions might pre-structure clerical assumptions were brought to light by a priest from Parish Alpha who commented on the fact that "initial impressions are often framed by news narratives rather than lived experience."

Additionally, racism was a result of limited contact to Muslim communities, particularly among clergy members who served in parishes that were located in more rural areas. Priests from Parish Epsilon and Parish Theta noted that there were little possibilities for firsthand interaction, which frequently required them to rely on anecdotal evidence, social narratives, or second-hand reports. One priest from Parish Epsilon made the observation that "Ethical insight is harder to form without sustained exposure to practicing communities, leaving interpretation more text-bound than contact-informed." This statement exemplifies how social distance contributes to the perpetuation of misconceptions and inadequate understandings (Sullivan, 2016).

Another important issue was the existence of educational and theological deficiency. Several of the participants emphasised that the curricula of colleges and universities provided only a limited amount of education on Islamic jurisprudence, ethical frameworks, and spiritual practices. As a consequence of this, some priests first saw rites like Salat, Sawm, Zakat, and Dhikr as being just procedural or formalistic, rather than being a catalyst for the formation of ethical principles. In a reflection, a priest from Parish Delta stated, "Without structured theological grounding, I initially underestimated the moral and

communal significance of these practices." This statement highlights the impact that formal education plays in forming informed perspectives (Halafoff, 2015).

These narratives give the impression that biases among Catholic priests are formed by a mix of factors, including the framing of the media, limited exposure to interpersonal interactions, and educational constraints. As crucial tactics for reducing these prejudices and building a more nuanced and empathic knowledge of Islamic spirituality, participants emphasised the significance of self-reflection and deliberate connection with people of other faiths as essential strategies.

Contribution of Islamic Practices to Moral and Ethical Formation

Religious leaders from the Catholic Church have often emphasised that Islamic spiritual practices cultivate virtues that are strongly associated with the development of moral and ethical principles. Salat was described as a practice that cultivates attention, self-regulation, and ethical accountability. A priest from Parish Alpha made the observation that scheduled daily prayers incorporate moral thought into ordinary living. Sawm, also known as fasting during the month of Ramadan, was observed to foster feelings of empathy, patience, humility, and social solidarity. A priest from Parish Delta emphasised that the embodied experience of fasting enhances awareness of social inequities and strengthens compassionate behaviour towards other people.

It has been determined that the obligatory act of giving alms, known as zakat, is a manner in which social justice, equity, and communal duty are operationalised. As a result of systematic charity giving, communal togetherness is strengthened, social hierarchies are reduced, and ethical concern is integrated into everyday action, clergy from Parish Beta and Parish Sigma pondered on the significance of this phenomenon. It was accepted that the practice of dhikr, which is the meditation remembrance of God, contributes to the development of contemplative awareness, emotional stability, and humility. Catholic contemplative activities, such as centring prayer and silent meditation, are similar to Dhikr, according to priests from Parish Zeta and Parish Eta. These practices encourage reflection and moral awareness.

These observations are in agreement with Kohlberg's (1984) framework for the development of moral principles, which states that the internalisation of moral principles is facilitated by regular participation in activities that are significant from an ethical standpoint. The findings are also consistent with the research that Schimmel (1975) conducted on Islamic mysticism and with the developmental supervision theory, which emphasises the importance that structured, repetitive practices have in forming ethical behaviour and prosocial attitudes (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). It is possible that Islamic spiritual practices function as systematic procedures for moral and ethical formation, thereby boosting traits that are valued throughout religious traditions. These discoveries, when taken together, suggest that Islamic spiritual practices serve this purpose.

Strategies to Mitigate Bias

Catholic priests have suggested several strategies to cultivate a more nuanced understanding of Islamic spiritual activities and to mitigate biases. Interfaith dialogue was consistently highlighted as a fundamental strategy for mitigating bias throughout the conversation. Clergy from Parishes Alpha and Beta observed that organised dialogues with Muslim leaders not only rectify misconceptions but also cultivate relational trust, empathy, and recognition of shared moral and ethical principles. This was a big discovery. This aligns with Abu-Nimer's (2001) assertion that ongoing conversation provides a relational and cognitive framework that enhances interfaith understanding, hence promoting alterations in both attitudes and behaviours.

Collaborative involvement in community activities emerged as a supplementary strategy to the initial idea. Clerics from Parishes Delta and Sigma noted that cooperative philanthropic initiatives, social outreach activities, and educational workshops create opportunities for experiential learning. These locations allow clergy to see the ethical aspects of Islamic activity directly. This form of involvement contests stereotypes and fosters the recognition of attributes such as benevolence, forbearance, social responsibility, and civic consciousness. Esposito and Kalin (2011) assert that cooperative social action fosters empathy and mitigates prejudice by familiarising participants with the lived ethical experiences of diverse religious traditions, aligning with their argument.

In the framework of the long-term strategy, formal theological education was deemed highly significant. The clergy of Parishes Gamma and Eta advocated for the incorporation of Islamic studies into seminary curricula. These studies will comprise Islamic jurisprudence, ethical philosophy, and religious observances. Priests acquire the conceptual abilities required to understand Islamic practices such as Salat, Sawm, Zakat, and Dhikr within their wider ethical and spiritual frameworks through systematic academic interaction. This, consequently, augments the priests' capacity for engaged pastoral reflection. This recommendation aligns with the ideas of *Nostra Aetate*, promulgated by Vatican II in 1965. These directions urge Catholic clergy to cultivate an informed and courteous understanding of various religious traditions.

Conversely, observational exposure was identified as a significant technique for mitigating biases. To reconcile textual information with lived experience, priests from Parishes Zeta and Epsilon underscored the significance of visiting mosques, madrassas, and Muslim community centres. These locations facilitate direct observation of spiritual and ethical practices. As previously stated, such engagement diminishes reliance on media representations or secondhand accounts, both of which might perpetuate misconceptions (Pew Research Centre, 2017; Sullivan, 2016).

These strategies illustrate that effective bias reduction is varied, comprising cognitive, experiential, and relational dimensions. Intentional and sustained interfaith engagement enhances comprehension of Islamic spirituality while fostering moral awareness, relational empathy, and social unity. This is achieved through dialogue, cooperative efforts, theological inquiry, and experiential observation. The adoption of these practices underscores the capacity

of Catholic clergy to exemplify interreligious respect and ethical leadership within Kenya's multifaceted religious environment. This thus fosters the establishment of productive and knowledgeable interfaith partnerships across communities.

Conclusion

This study solicited the thoughts of Catholic priests regarding Islamic spiritual activity within the Catholic Diocese of Kitale. Special emphasis was placed on Salat, Sawm, Zakat, and Dhikr. The investigation comprised the biases shaping these judgements, the moral and ethical ramifications of the activities, and strategies to mitigate prejudice. The findings indicate that, overall, priests hold a positive view of Islamic rites, acknowledging their structured, morally formative, and ethically instructive nature simultaneously. Salat and Sawm exemplify behaviours that can foster self-regulation, discipline, empathy, and awareness of communal and spiritual responsibilities. Dhikr aligned with Catholic contemplative traditions, fostering moral awareness, humility, and contemplation, while Zakat was acknowledged as a manifestation of social justice and equity. Zakat was acknowledged as a mechanism for promoting social justice and equity.

Notwithstanding this acknowledgement, the investigation revealed that biases persist. These biases are influenced by media portrayals, limited direct engagement with Muslim communities, and shortcomings in theological education. The clergy in rural parishes predominantly depended on second-hand narratives, anecdotal evidence and socially disseminated beliefs, resulting in inadequate or misleading perceptions of Islamic customs. This was due to a scarcity of possibilities for experiential learning in rural parishes. The participants in the survey recognised the importance of self-reflection, purposeful engagement with others of many faiths, and organised learning as essential tools for surmounting unfavourable views.

Furthermore, the study identified several methods that may be employed to mitigate bias and enhance informed comprehension. Effective solutions have been identified as interfaith dialogue, collaborative community initiatives, experiential exposure to Islamic practices, and the integration of Islamic studies into seminary curricula. These ways enable Catholic clergy to transcend superficial or text-bound perceptions, so fostering relational trust, ethical awareness, and empathy. The findings emphasise the importance of integrating cognitive, experiential, and relational methods to foster a nuanced, respectful, and ethically informed understanding of various religious traditions in pastoral care.

The study indicates that Catholic priests in the Diocese of Kitale can acknowledge the ethical and moral depth of Islamic spiritual practices when afforded opportunities for participation and education. It emphasises the transformative potential of organised interfaith engagements, underscoring the necessity of intentional exposure, theological education, and reflective dialogue as essential elements in the endeavour to surmount biases and foster mutual respect. The insights provided contribute to the broader discourse on interreligious comprehension, pastoral methodology, and ethical development within multi-faith environments. They also offer pragmatic recommendations for improving interfaith collaboration, ethical development, and communal unity within Kenya's religiously varied environment.

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