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FOREWORD

The 2025 Fourth International Conference on Cultural Studies (FICCS) was convened with a shared purpose to elevate Indigenous voices and critically engage with the transformative potential of traditional knowledge in addressing some of the most pressing global challenges. Under the theme *“From Tradition to Innovation: Indigenous Solutions to Global Challenges,”* the forum brought together a diverse and intergenerational gathering of scholars, practitioners, cultural workers, and Indigenous community members. The event fostered rich dialogue, encouraged collaborative inquiry, and created space for the respectful exchange of knowledge across disciplines and worldviews.

This journal introduces a special issue that features the full papers presented during the forum. Together, these contributions represent a substantial body of scholarship that affirms the enduring value, adaptability, and intellectual integrity of Indigenous knowledge systems. The papers explore a wide spectrum of subjects, including ecologically grounded architectural design, land-based education, community health practices informed by traditional knowledge, cultural heritage preservation, and Indigenous political engagement in contemporary governance.

Throughout the forum, discussions emphasized the central role of Indigenous Peoples in biodiversity conservation, the importance of ethical and participatory research practices, and the necessity of centering Indigenous leadership in the pursuit of sustainability. The research presented examined diverse case studies and thematic areas, such as the Anishinaabe worldview on freshwater ecosystems,

Gaddang ceremonial traditions, Ifugao community tourism, and prenatal care practices among Agta women. Each paper offers critical insights into how Indigenous perspectives provide comprehensive, sustainable, and culturally grounded approaches to local and global issues.

The organizers express their deep appreciation to the authors, Indigenous leaders, peer reviewers, and participants whose collective contributions shaped the intellectual and cultural richness of FICCS 2025. They also acknowledge Saint Mary's University's support, which made both the event and this publication possible.

This journal seeks to inspire sustained scholarly engagement, foster meaningful collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and promote a deeper understanding of Indigenous knowledge as a living and evolving resource. It affirms that Indigenous intellectual traditions are not only a vital part of our collective heritage but also a guiding force for building more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable futures.

The Editors

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Exploring Indigenous Wisdom: Architecture of the Catholic Pilgrimage Marian Grotto at Sendangsono, Kulon Progo

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic movement in Indonesia has fostered a fascinating relationship between local customs and Catholic liturgy. Pilgrimage to Marian grottoes has been a deeply valued tradition among local Catholics since the early 19th century. Catholicism's embrace and unification of diversity have shaped the architecture of Marian Grotto pilgrimage sites through the adaptation of indigenous wisdom inherent in the local context. Sendangsono in Kulon Progo is a prime example of this phenomenon. It is the oldest and most popular pilgrimage site among Javanese Catholics and other cultural groups to this day. This paper aims to explore the unification of indigenous wisdom and Catholic liturgy in the Sendangsono Marian Grotto, uncovering its latent sacred features for local Catholics. Using a qualitative-descriptive-historical method with a contextual architectural approach, this study identifies and analyzes the indigenous wisdom embedded in the spatial configuration and architectural elements of Sendangsono. The findings reveal that the spatial configurations and architectural elements—such as gates, roofs, and decorations—display visual similarities to Javanese architecture. Furthermore, the architecture of Sendangsono respects the loci by using local materials, which were sourced and constructed by the Javanese community. The research concludes that the architecture of Sendangsono integrates elements of

Catholic liturgy while remaining true to the indigenous wisdom of Javanese culture, accommodating devotional rituals to the Virgin Mary. The benefits of this paper are expected to significantly contribute to the foundational understanding that indigenous wisdom can be a collaborative approach to the design of sustainable architecture, even in sacred buildings.

Keywords: Architecture, Catholic pilgrimage, Indigenous wisdom, Marian grotto, Sendangsono

INTRODUCTION

The development of Catholicism in Indonesia has fostered a fascinating relationship between local customs and Catholic liturgy. Pilgrimages to Marian grottoes have been a highly regarded and growing tradition among Indonesian Catholics since the early 19th century. The acceptance and integration of Catholic diversity have shaped the architectural design of Marian pilgrimage sites, incorporating elements of local wisdom within the regional context.

As an introduced religion with its cultural traditions, Catholicism has remained open to local influences, leading to encounters, acceptance, and blending—commonly referred to as acculturation—across various cultural dimensions, including architecture. The Marian pilgrimage site represents a sacred space rich in Catholic liturgical meaning, harmoniously intertwined with local cultural traditions.

The architecture of Marian pilgrimage sites cannot be separated from local influences. The acculturation of local culture and Catholic liturgy has resulted in architectural compromises within these sites, ensuring that the sacred experience remains meaningful for local Catholics. Most Marian pilgrimage sites in Indonesia have emerged due to the local spiritual history. The physical elements of these pilgrimage sites encompass both natural features, such as mountains, water sources, and caves, and man-made structures, such as gates, walls, and roofs. These architectural elements serve as an *axis mundi*, bridging the interaction between the Catholic faithful

(*microcosm*) and the divine (*macrocosm*) (Eliade & Trask, 1987; Schwartz, 2014). The spatial configurations and architectural expressions of Marian pilgrimage sites reflect the dynamic interaction between local culture and Catholic liturgy. Elements such as gates, roofs, and decorative motifs exhibit visual similarities to indigenous architectural styles (Amalia et al., 2019; Leevianto & Aly, 2017).

The spread of Catholicism and the preservation of the Marian pilgrimage tradition are part of a broader cultural transformation. This empirical phenomenon represents a cultural encounter (*culture-contact*) between Catholicism and local traditions. The architecture of Marian pilgrimage sites is both influenced by and influential upon the local environment in which it is situated. This acculturation process shapes values, norms, ideas, attitudes, and behaviors, ultimately contributing to the architectural adaptation of Marian pilgrimage sites.

Local wisdom plays a crucial role in sustaining community identity and fostering successful social development. Consequently, research that explores the diversity of Indonesia's local wisdom through the architecture of Marian pilgrimage sites is essential in supporting cultural preservation.

Therefore, this paper explores the integration of Indigenous wisdom and Catholic liturgy in the oldest Marian Grotto in Indonesia, unveiling its sacred significance for local Catholics. This research contributes to the body of knowledge on Indonesian vernacular architecture and the study of architectural acculturation. It also deepens the understanding of Catholic liturgy and its influence on the development of Marian pilgrimage sites in Indonesia. The findings of this study are expected to aid in the preservation of cultural and historical heritage related to belief systems in Indonesia, particularly Catholicism.

METHODOLOGY

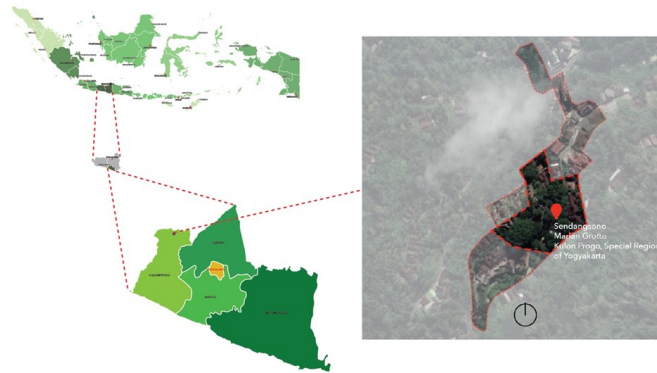
As an integral aspect of culture, religion embodies Indigenous knowledge that is inherently local (Sudradjat, 2019). Since pilgrimage is inherently linked to the concept of the

sacred, everything associated with it is believed to embody sacred values, as it holds spiritual significance for a particular culture. Sacred architecture serves as a medium for the pursuit of reality and the meaning of life, articulating belief systems and reflecting cultural expressions. In the context of sacred architecture, place holds profound meaning, as it establishes an environment that is conveyed through its form and spatial arrangement (Salura, 2018; Salura & Fauzy, 2012), offering an experience that conveys its inherent significance (Barrie, 1996; Rasmussen, 1964).

The object of this study is Sendangsono Marian Grotto in Kalibawang, Kulon Progo, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia (figure 1). It has long been recognized as a sacred center for the worship of Indigenous Javanese religion. Since the early 19th century, Sendangsono has held a significant devotional and spiritual role in the lives of Javanese Catholics in Central Java (Beck, 2018).

Figure 1

Location of Sendangsono Marian Grotto



This qualitative research focuses on the expression of form and spatial configuration of Sendangsono Marian Grotto. The physical elements were collected as primary data through observation, documentation (photos, sketches, notes), and interviews. Secondary data were gathered through a literature review, which involves collecting information and written materials stored in the archives of pilgrimage site administrators, including maps, articles, reports, books, and

other pertinent documents. Data analysis was conducted by mapping the data according to Indigenous Javanese using the descriptive-historical method. This led to the conclusion regarding the indigenous wisdom embedded in the spatial configuration and architectural elements of Sendangsono, which express the latent sacred features of Javanese Catholics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

History of Sendangsono Marian Grotto

Sendangsono is located along the Menoreh hills in the Kalibawang area, Kulon Progo Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. According to history, the name Sendangsono is derived from two Javanese words: *sendang* (meaning 'spring' in English) and *sono* or *sana* (referring to a type of giant tree). In Indigenous Javanese beliefs, both springs and trees are often regarded as dwellings for nymphs and other supernatural beings. Sendangsono had become a sacred site for meditation among locals seeking to cultivate Javanese spirituality before the arrival of Catholicism.

Sendangsono marks the birth and development of the Javanese Catholics in Central Java. It is the site where the first baptism of Indigenous believers was conducted by Father Van Lith, a Roman Catholic missionary, in 1904. During the establishment of the Sendangsono Marian Grotto on December 8, 1929, Jesuit priest J. B. Prenthaler stated that Sendangsono was an expression of gratitude for the protection of the Virgin Mary during the mission in Kalibawang. Since then, Sendangsono has been planned and developed as a pilgrimage site for the Marian Grotto, serving local Catholics and other communities.

The architecture of Sendangsono Marian Grotto

As of 2024, Sendangsono has been meticulously developed as a comprehensive pilgrimage site (Figure 2), equipped with the following facilities:

1. Marian Grotto – Located in front of the Sana tree and

blessed in 1929.

2. Two Stations of the Cross:

- o The first and longer route extends from the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, 1.5 km away, to the pilgrimage site (constructed in 1958).

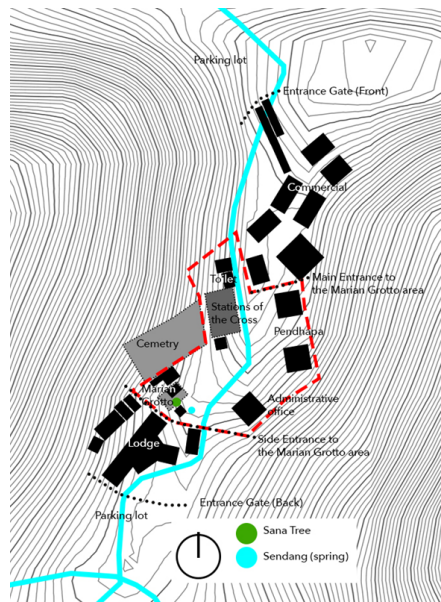
- o The second and shorter route is situated in the northern area of the pilgrimage site.

- o Three Chapels – The Holy Trinity, The Apostles, and Mother Mary of All Nations.

Additional Facilities – *Pendhapa*, restrooms, and other amenities.

Figure 2

Map of Sendangsono Marian Grotto



The architecture of the Sendangsono Marian Grotto has developed in several phases. Following its blessing in 1929, Sendangsono was initially developed to serve as a place of devotion by placing a Virgin Mary Statue in front of the Sana tree (figure 3a and b), marking the first phase of the pilgrimage

site's development. The stones used in the construction of the cave are white stones, which are locally sourced materials. The significant expansion of the Sendangsono Marian Grotto began in 1969 when diocesan priest and architect Y. B. Mangunwijaya became involved in its planning and design. The involvement of Father Mangunwijaya began with the design and development of the contoured land in the pilgrimage area, transforming it into terraces. After the terraced land was completed, stone retaining walls were placed, sourced from the river in front of the cave (Figure 4).

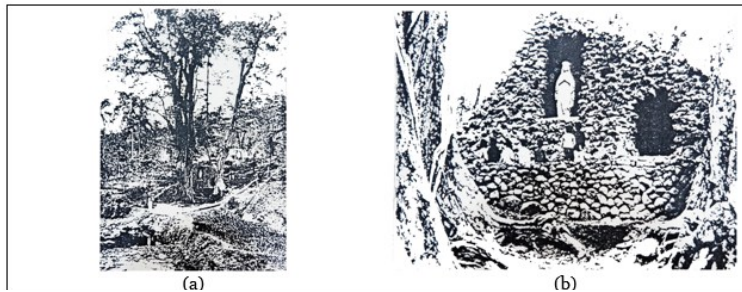


Figure 3. *Sana tree (a) a Virgin Mary statue in 1929 (b) Source archived administrative document (2024)*



In broad terms, the construction of the Sedangsono Marian Grotto adheres to the principles of Indigenous wisdom of Javanese architecture. In accordance with the spatial configuration in Javanese architecture (Budiwiyanto, 2013;

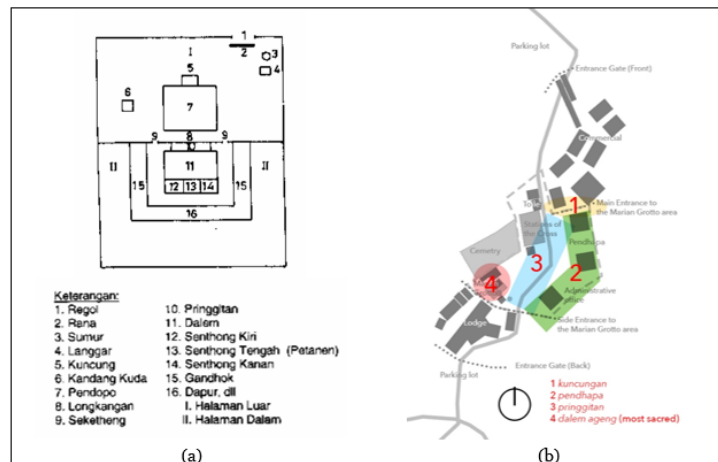
Kartono, 2005), the Sendangsono area is divided into (Figure 5):

1. *Kuncungan* is a space that functions as a terrace.
2. *Pendhapa* is a traditional Javanese pavilion used for communal purposes.
3. *Pringitan* is a semi-open configuration, with its spatial atmosphere intentionally crafted to be dimly lit, evoking a sense of mysticism.

Dalem ageng is a private space characterized by a tranquil and sacred atmosphere.

Figure 5

The spatial configuration of Javanese architecture Source (a) The spatial configuration of Sendangsono Marian Grotto (b)



The *kuncungan* area at Sendangsono, positioned at the entrance, functions as both a transitional space and a temporary resting area for pilgrims on their way to the *pendhapa*. The architectural expression of the *pendhapa* at Sendangsono is the *Kampung* structure. The *Kampung* is a still house with a wooden framework with a roof covering made of clay tiles. Both the *kuncungan* and *pendhapa* areas are designed as spaces for human interaction, intended to serve as areas for rest and dialogue (Figures 6a and b). This aligns with the Indigenous

Javanese principle of engaging in dialogue without regard for social status.

Figure 6

Kuncungan Representation at Sendangsono (a) Pendhapa at Sendangsono (b)



The architectural expression employed in the *dalem ageng* area at Sendangsono is the *Joglo* structure. The *Joglo* is a traditional Javanese architectural form, historically serving as a residence for the upper-middle-class society. This structure is characterized by its distinctive roof design, which reflects both cultural significance and functional aspects of Javanese architecture (Figure 7). In Javanese architecture, the most sacred space within the *dalem ageng* is the *senthong*. Traditionally, the *senthong* is designated as a space for *manekung* or meditation – the process of habituating the inner self to achieve stillness. Access to this space is restricted to individuals with a specific spiritual purpose or intent. The *senthong* at Sendangsono is situated within the Grotto area, adjacent to the altar for Mass (Figure 8). The Marian cave area represents the most sacred space of the Sendangsono Marian Grotto. The verdant presence of the Sana tree enhances this sanctity. In this area, Catholics, both Javanese and from other cultures, as well as individuals from different faith backgrounds, gather to pray.

Figure 7

Joglo structure Source (Kartono, 2005) (a) The architectural expression of the dalem ageng at Sendangsono exhibits a structure similar to Joglo (b)

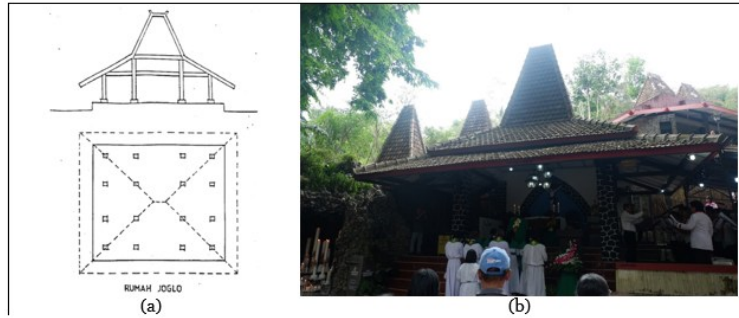


Figure 8

Marian Cave and Altar for Mass are the Representation of Senthong



The application of Indigenous Javanese wisdom in the Sendangsono Marian Grotto is evident not only in the spatial arrangement and architectural form but also in the construction process. According to interviews and archival documents, no two decorative elements are identical (Figure 9). This is due to the fact that the creation process is entirely handmade by the local Javanese community, with the design and materials being highly dependent on the availability of local resources at the time.

Figure 9

Decorative Elements at Sendangsono Marian Grotto



CONCLUSION

The construction of the Sendangsono Marian Grotto follows the principles of Indigenous Javanese architectural wisdom in accommodating devotional rituals to the Virgin Mary. In line with the spatial configuration of Javanese architecture, the Sendangsono area is divided into four sections: *Kuncungan*, *Pendhapa*, *Pringitan*, and *Dalem Ageng*. The principles of Indigenous Javanese architectural wisdom are also evident in the architectural forms of the Sendangsono Marian Grotto. Specifically, the design incorporates the *Kampung* structure for the *Pendhapa* building and the *Joglo* structure for the altar building located in the *Dalem Ageng* area, reflecting traditional Javanese architectural typologies. The Marian cave area constitutes the most sacred space within the Sendangsono Marian Grotto. It embodies the most private aspect of Javanese architecture, known as *Senthong*. Furthermore, the entire building process was carried out manually by the local Javanese community, with the design and material selection relying heavily on the availability of local resources at the time.

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Bridging Educational Gaps: Designing Transitional Learning Hubs for the Students Residing In the Mountainous Barangays of Naguilian, La Union

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ABSTRACT

Students in the mountainous barangays of Naguilian, La Union, face significant challenges in accessing education during inclement weather due to the region's vulnerability to flooding and landslides caused by typhoons. This study investigated the geographical factors that hinder students' access to education, focusing on those living far from school and located in hazard-prone areas. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining spatial analysis using Geographic Information System (GIS) software to identify the optimal location for the proposed transitional learning hub located in mountainous regions of Naguilian and qualitative data gathered through surveys and interviews with students and community members. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of physical and social barriers to educational access. The study revealed that students residing in mountainous regions of Naguilian are having difficulties accessing the nearby school during and after natural hazards. Minor rainfall was found to create impassable road conditions in certain areas, particularly along routes going to school. This situation makes it difficult for students who rely on walking in such dangerous

conditions. Thus, this study proposed the establishment of transitional learning hubs in Naguilian, La Union, which aim to serve as a medium for maintaining students' access to educational opportunities during disruptions caused by inclement weather and serve as a model for adaptable learning environments in other underserved and hazard-prone regions. By integrating community and vernacular architecture principles, the design emphasizes cost-effectiveness, disaster-resiliency, and environmental sustainability, tailored to the unique geographical conditions of Naguilian. This research advocates for a proactive design approach that prioritizes educational environments responsive to the needs of communities facing environmental challenges.

Keywords: Community architecture, critical Regionalism, disaster-resilient, transitional learning hub, vernacular architecture

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines ranked number one among the countries with the highest risks worldwide in terms of natural disasters and extreme weather conditions, with an index of 46.86 (World Risk Report, 2023). This is mainly due to the location and geographical context, as the risk of coastal hazards such as typhoons, storm surges, and rising sea levels is high. Also, as the islands are located within the "Ring of Fire," earthquakes and volcanoes pose severe risks to the safety of the people (CFE-DM, 2018). Natural disasters often damage infrastructure, disrupt education and health services, and destroy homes and personal belongings, making life harder for many families (World Bank Group, 2023). These are all significant ongoing threats that regularly disrupt education in the Philippines. Children suffer from the global learning crisis, which has been identified as having limited access to quality education, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural

Organization.

One of the critical challenges schools face during disasters is the impact on students living far from the school, especially those who live in mountainous regions. One of the primary concerns of students living far from school during a disaster is the risk of travel. Unpredictable occurrences of disasters can expose students to various hazards as they commute to and from school, potentially leading to injuries, loss of life, or property damage. In natural or artificial disasters, students living far from their schools face significant challenges that disrupt their access to education, limiting their ability to attend classes and participate in learning (Mirzaei, 2019).

Approximately 78 percent of public schools and 96 percent of students in the Philippines are exposed and vulnerable to multiple hazards. Between 2021 and 2023, around 4,000 schools were damaged due to various disasters, disrupting learning continuity for two million children. (World Bank Group, 2023). The Philippines faces frequent natural disasters that disrupt the school calendar and limit access to education, especially for students living far from schools (Symaco, 2013).

Disasters have caused widespread damage to infrastructure, including schools, and have resulted in the temporary or permanent closure of educational institutions. As a result, students have experienced significant disruptions to their education, which can lead to lower academic achievement and, ultimately, lower IQ scores (Reinman, 2015). The adverse effects of these disruptions somehow contribute to the Philippines' low ranking in global average IQ assessments, ranked 111th out of 199 countries with an average IQ score of 81.64 for 2023, which puts us on the outside looking in compared to some of our other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) counterparts (World Population Review, 2024).

La Union is composed of coastal and mountainous regions; it covers five circuits: Northern, Central Central, Eastern, South, and Southeastern circuits. The Central Eastern La Union consists of municipalities located in mountainous areas, such as Bagulin, Burgos, and Naguilian; only Bauang is near the coast.

According to the Provincial Government of La Union, Naguilian is the most prone to natural hazards, comprising 37 barangays alongside Bauang and Bagulin. Naguilian is exposed to hydrometeorological hazards such as flooding, rain-induced landslides, and tension cracks triggered by solid typhoons, which bring heavy monsoon rains caused by forest denudation, lack of vegetation cover in steep areas, and loose soil along riverbanks and creeks. Naguilian is considered a high risk of typhoons and earthquakes (figures 1 & 2) (DENR, 2024; PHIVOLCS, 2024). For the last three years, flooding has been the most common hazard that affects almost all barangays, with a high susceptibility to flooding and landslides (figure 4), and some of the Barangays are also susceptible to liquefaction (figure 3). The population that is exposed and vulnerable to rain-induced landslides comprises twenty-three (23) barangays mainly located near mountains and creeks. (PGLU,2024).

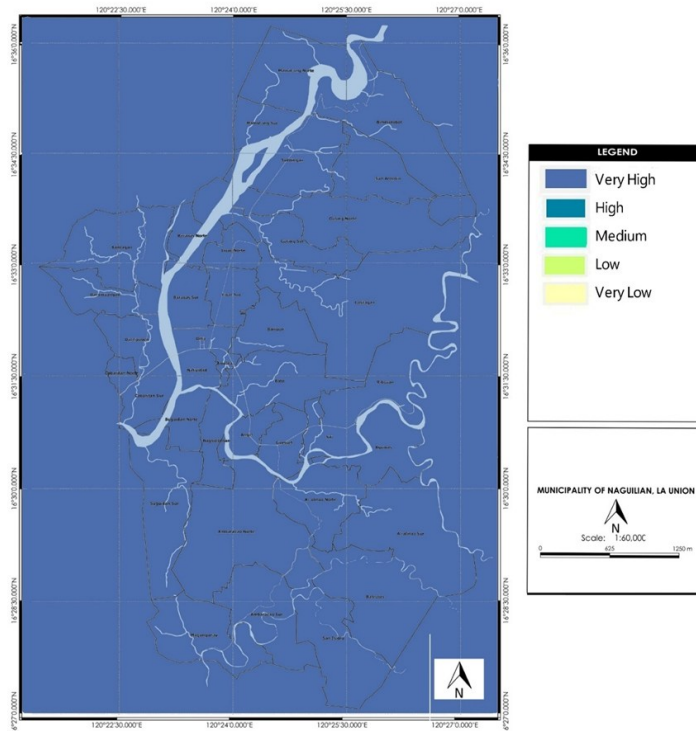


Figure 1. Risk to typhoons: All areas in Naguilian have a very high risk of typhoons (DENR, 2021)

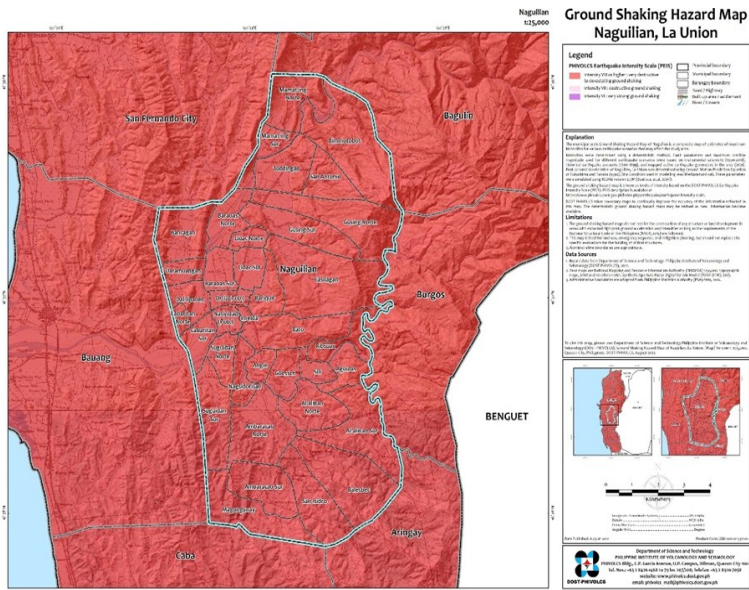


Figure 2. Ground Shaking hazard map of Naguilian, color red indicating Intensity VIII or higher: Very Destructive (PHIVOLCS,2022)

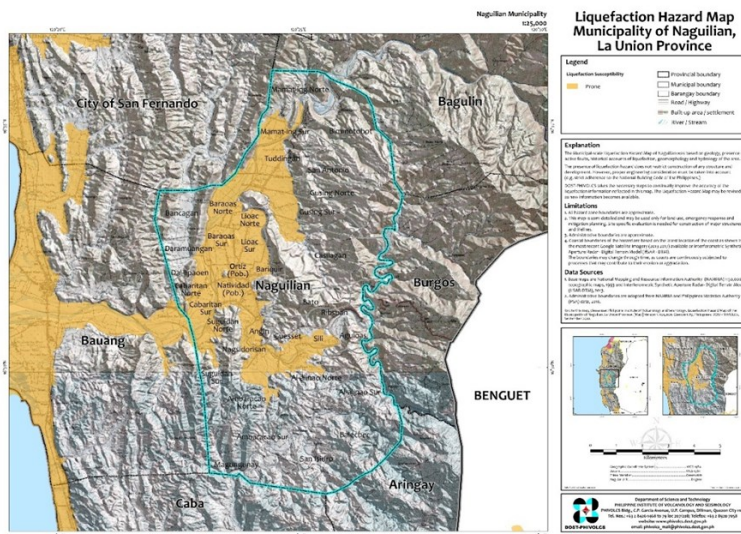


Figure 3. Liquefaction Hazard Map of Naguilian, La Union, color yellow indicating areas that are prone to liquefaction (PHIVOLCS,2022)

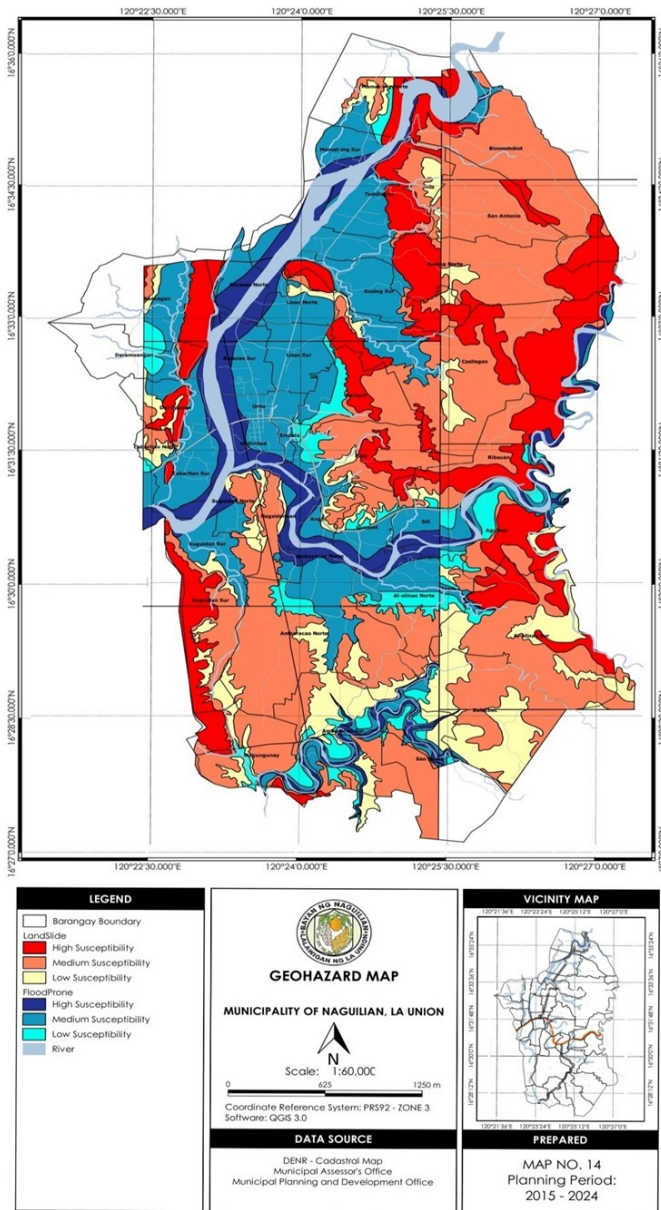


Figure 4. Geohazard map of Naguilian, La Union

(Image: from Planning and Development Office of Naguilian)

Education is a fundamental right, but geographical and environmental factors often create barriers for students in far-flung areas (Torres,2024; Bicar et al.,2020). [Within this context](#)

of high disaster risk, education in Naguilian faces particular challenges, especially in mountainous regions where geographical and environmental factors create significant barriers for students. Naguilian is highly susceptible to flooding and landslides (*figure 3*), which often make roads impassable and pose dangers to students traveling to school. Teachers report that during and after typhoons, many students are unable to attend classes. For instance, at Eastern Naguilian National High School (ENNHS), almost half of the students from barangay Al-Alinao Sur cannot attend school during typhoons. Even mild or heavy rain can create challenges, as roads become muddy and difficult to traverse, particularly for students who must walk long distances to school.

Transitional learning hubs significantly impact disaster-affected communities by serving as catalysts for recovery and resilience. Beyond restoring education, these hubs provide immediate economic opportunities through local labor and material sourcing, equipping residents with valuable construction skills. They foster social cohesion by involving parents, teachers, and leaders in planning and maintenance, creating a sense of ownership and enhancing communal ties. Psychosocially, these hubs offer children safe, structured environments to rebuild routines. At the same time, parents gain peace of mind to focus on rebuilding their lives. Additionally, their emphasis on disaster risk reduction inspires safer reconstruction practices, promoting long-term resilience. Transitional learning hubs are more than educational spaces; they are vital centers of hope, unity, and progress for the communities they serve (UNICEF, 2013).

The creation of learning hubs is crucial to overcoming the barriers faced by students in this disaster-prone region. The proposed learning hubs will serve as a community center that supports educational learning and promotes disaster preparedness and environmental stewardship. This initiative will ensure that education remains accessible to all, regardless of geographical or environmental conditions, and will promote long-term sustainability within the community.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods, to guide the development of transitional learning hubs in the mountainous areas of Naguilian, La Union. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by combining the strengths of both methodologies.

Research Design

Qualitative research methods explore the local community's needs and preferences, providing insights into the social and cultural context of the study. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with various stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and community leaders (i.e., Barangay Captains and Barangay Health Workers). These interviews will explore perspectives on educational needs, disaster preparedness, and preferences for learning spaces. Surveys will be administered to gather educational experiences and preferences for learning hub features. Lastly, field observations were conducted to document existing educational facilities, infrastructure conditions (i.e., road network conditions), community spaces, and environmental conditions in the mountainous barangays. The qualitative research will be informed by Kenneth Frampton's theory of Critical Regionalism, which emphasizes the importance of balancing modern architectural practices with regional specificity. This will involve analyzing how local building traditions, materials, and environmental considerations can be integrated into the design of the learning hubs.

Quantitative research will focus on gathering empirical data to inform the design and location of the learning hubs. A geographic information system (GIS) is employed to analyze geographical data, including topography, hazard maps, and population density, to identify optimal locations for the learning hubs.

Research Locale

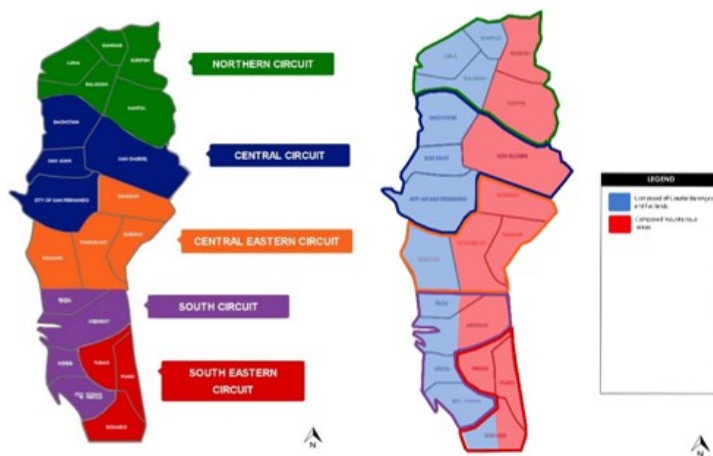
The research locale, which is the mountainous barangay of Naguilian, La Union, holds significant importance in this

study as it embodies the challenges faced by rural and disaster-prone communities in accessing quality education. Naguilian experiences frequent natural disasters, such as flooding and landslides, which make students residing in mountainous regions travel in risky situations and often prevent them from attending school. Additionally, during heavy rains, many of the routes to school become muddy and impassable, further complicating access to education. This geographical vulnerability necessitates the development of a community-based learning center that provides educational opportunities and incorporates resilience and sustainability into its design.

SITE SELECTION

Figure 9-10

Boundary Map of La Union (PGLU,2024)



The main goal of the study is to address the accessibility of education for students residing in far-flung areas, especially those located in mountainous regions experiencing different natural hazards. Topographic analysis was used to identify which region in La Union is mainly composed of mountainous regions (Figures 9 & 10). It is identified that Central Eastern La Union covers most mountainous regions compared to Southeastern, South, Northern, and Central La Union.

The main consideration in selecting a locale is identifying first which municipality in Central Eastern La Union is the most vulnerable to natural hazards. Naguilian, Bagulin, and Burgos are mountainous and forested areas. Only the Municipality of Bauang has a coastal area along a portion of the shoreline of the West Philippine Sea.

The **Municipality of Naguilian**, which comprises 37 barangays, is highly susceptible to hydrometeorological hazards, particularly flooding, rain-induced landslides, and tension cracks triggered by powerful typhoons that bring heavy monsoon rains. Naguilian and the broader province of La Union are especially vulnerable to landslides caused by factors such as forest denudation, insufficient vegetation cover in steep regions, and unstable soil along riverbanks and creeks. These environmental conditions primarily affect twenty-three barangays located near mountainous areas and creeks, leaving the population exposed to these hazards. Landslide occurrences often result in temporary road closures, severely impacting economic activity by hindering the movement of people and the transport of goods and services within Naguilian and nearby municipalities. Additionally, Naguilian is largely mountainous terrain and has a relatively high population density as it is a first-class municipality aiming to become a city.

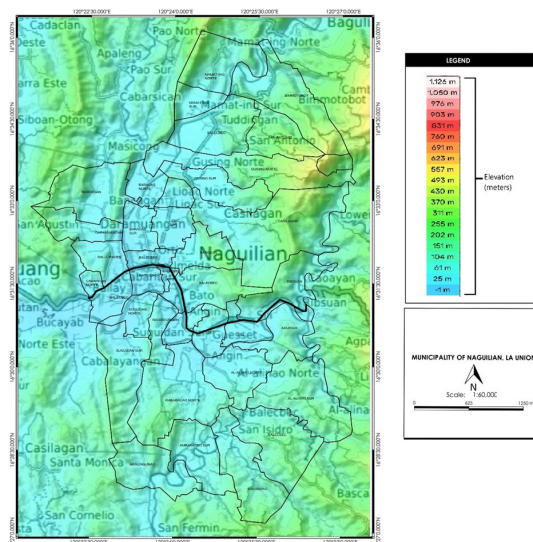


Figure 11. Elevation map (topographic-map.com)

The project locale needs to be specific, so the barangays that are located in mountainous regions must be identified. Using the software QGIS and elevationmap.net, the barangays located in mountainous regions are identified. (Figures 11 & 12). In Figure 12, different colors are used to indicate the different elevations in Naguilian, La Union. Blue is considered flat land, while red indicates the uphill areas. In Naguilian, the color varies from blue to yellow-green, 10 meters to 510 meters. A region is defined as mountainous if its elevation varies by at least 300 meters, as shown in **Figure 11 Elevation Map** (*topographic-map.com*) identified as a hill if it is lower than 300 meters (Price, 2015). In Figure 13, barangays that are considered as hill and mountainous regions are identified. Dark blue indicates a barangay that is considered a mountainous region, while light blue represents uphill barangays.

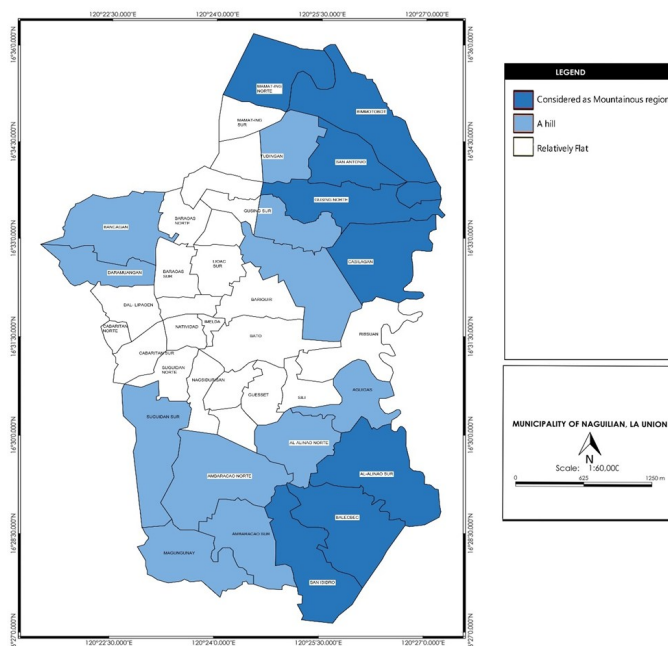


Figure 12. Hill and Mountain regions in Naguilian La Union
(QGIS mapping)

In figures 13 and 14, different schools in Naguilian are reflected; it is evident that almost all of the barangays have elementary schools, while the secondary schools are located mostly in relatively flat areas.

The different areas that are reflected in Figure 16 are the areas that are likely to be impassable and challenging to traverse during the occurrence of natural hazards. These conditions significantly affect students' ability to attend school during and after a disaster, disrupting their school attendance and overall learning continuity.

District	BEIS	Sch#	School Name	Barangay	Sect#	SY 2020-21	SY 2021-22	SY 2022-23	SY 2023-24	SY 2024-2025
Naguilian	400093		Holy Infant Niño Montessori and High School	NATIVIDAD (PCB)	Privat	180	170	171	164	CS
Naguilian	400094		Naguilian Learning Center, Inc	IMELDA	Privat	75	84	96	78	71
Naguilian	400095		St. Augustine School of Naguilian, Inc.	NATIVIDAD (PCB)	Privat	112	86	93	92	93
Naguilian	410223		Philippine Central College of Arts & Science & Te	NATIVIDAD (PCB)	Privat	62				CLOSED SCHOOL (CS)
Naguilian	41034		Naguilian Baptist Christian School, Inc.	ORTIZ (PCB)	Privat	7	33	61	107	114
Naguilian	41048		COLEGIO de LA UNION	NATIVIDAD (PCB)	Privat	115	93	100	114	83
Naguilian	100970		Al-Alinao ES	AL-ALINAO NOR	Public	157	158	132	121	96
Naguilian	100971		Ambaracao Sur Elementary School	AMBARACAO SU	Public	260	226	231	221	226
Naguilian	100972		Al-alinao Sur ES	AL-ALINAO SUR	Public	126	126	122	111	94
Naguilian	100973		Balecbeec ES	BALECBEEC	Public	111	103	95	101	94
Naguilian	100974		Bancagan ES	BANCAGAN	Public	127	123	116	107	106
Naguilian	100975		BARADAS SURELEM SCHOOL	BARADAS SUR	Public	201	197	206	200	198
Naguilian	100976		Bariquir Elementary School	BARIQUIR	Public	218	215	220	211	198
Naguilian	100977		Bato Elementary School	BATO	Public	134	181	177	177	160
Naguilian	100978		Lower Bimolobot ES	BIMMOTOBOT	Public	48	40	42	42	41
Naguilian	100979		Bimolobot 2 Upper PS	BIMMOTOBOT	Public	110	110	103	106	98
Naguilian	100981		Mamat-Ing Norte Elementary School	MAMAT-ING NOR	Public	81	72	67	66	64
Naguilian	100984		Don Tomas R. Mendoza ES	FRISUAN	Public	256	240	233	227	204
Naguilian	100985		Dr. Hermogenes T. Belen ES	ORTIZ (PCB)	Public	202	182	196	249	232
Naguilian	100986		Guesset ES	GUESSET	Public	234	252	245	257	250
Naguilian	100987		Gusing ES	GUSING NORTE	Public	311	307	274	283	237
Naguilian	100988		Lioac ES	LIQAC SUR	Public	235	225	226	223	214
Naguilian	100989		Mamat-Ing Sur ES	MAMAT-ING SUR	Public	210	215	221	219	200
Naguilian	100990		Nagsidorisan ES	NAGSIDORISAN	Public	127	115	111	116	102
Naguilian	100991		Naguilian CS	ORTIZ (PCB)	Public	957	932	871	854	780
Naguilian	100992		San Antonio ES	SAN ANTONIO	Public	119	126	115	115	99
Naguilian	100993		San Isidro ES	SAN ISIDRO	Public	103	105	95	83	85
Naguilian	100995		Tuddingan ES	TUDDINGAN	Public	189	178	204	182	166
Naguilian	131154		AMADEO FLORENDO RIMANDO ELEMENTARY	AMBARACAO NC	Public	182	177	166	165	148
Naguilian	151006		Mangkaeng PS	GUSING NORTE	Public	35	36	30	30	23
Naguilian	281625		Baraas Norte Elementary School	BARADAS NOR	Public	115	108	108	90	89
Naguilian	300122		Naguilian National HS	IMELDA	Public	3044	3408	3376	2945	2966
Naguilian	300123		Northern Naguilian National High School	GUSING NORTE	Public	556	560	511	441	445
Naguilian	300144		Southern Naguilian National High School	AMBARACAO SU	Public	277	274	247	206	197
Naguilian	321005		Eastern Naguilian National High School	GUESSET	Public	372	376	374	335	346
Naguilian	340823		Naguilian Senior High School	ORTIZ (PCB)	Public	479	496	394	425	503
Naguilian	500355		Suguidan Integrated School	SUGUIDAN SUR	Public	209	205	196	175	159
Naguilian	500360		Daramulangan Integrated School	DARAMULANGAN	Public	357	353	312	310	294
Naguilian	500495		Casilagan Elementary School	CASILAGAN	Public	393	392	373	364	353
Naguilian	501362		Cabaritan Sur Integrated School	CABARITAN SUR	Public	406	460	465	466	445
										total total
										1695 1109

Figure 13
Schools in Naguilian La Union (Deped,S.Y.2024-2025)

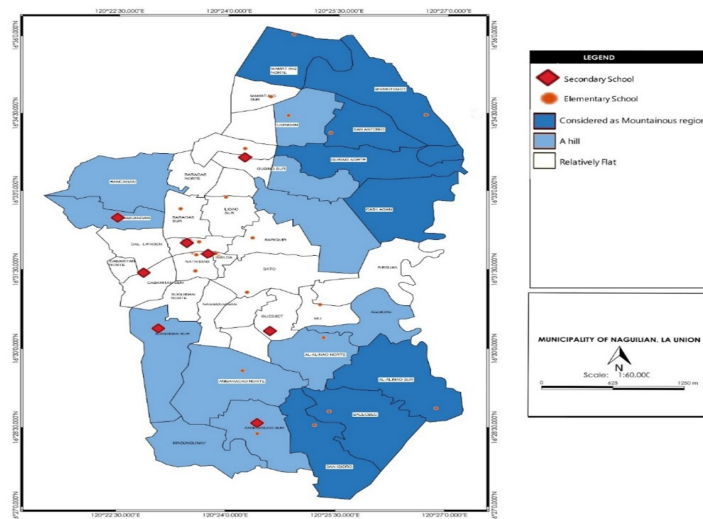


Figure 14

Location of Different Schools in Naguilian La Union (GIS mapping)

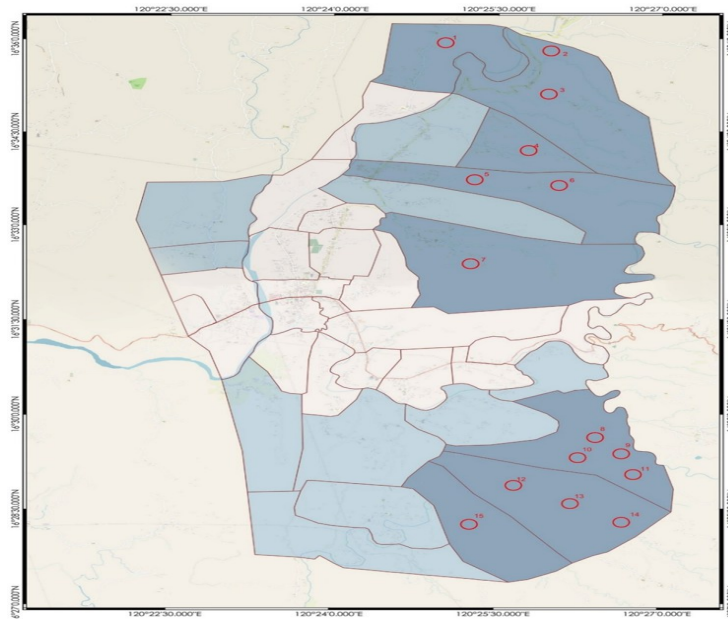


Figure 15

Impassable Routes During the Occurrence of Natural Hazards

In this study, which focuses on building transitional learning hubs in Naguilian, La Union, the need to have a deep understanding of the locale is fundamental. The region's

mountainous terrain, frequent natural hazards, and transportation challenges are major obstacles to students' access to the nearest school. These characteristics align closely with the research objectives, which aim to create transitional learning hubs that serve as a medium for students to continue their learning despite the occurrence of different natural hazards; these transitional learning hubs will be designed to be disaster-resilient, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable.

By considering the specific geographical conditions of the area, the study aims to address the community's unique educational needs, particularly in reducing the impact of disasters on education. This understanding reinforces the need for infrastructure that can withstand natural calamities while fostering inclusivity and sustainability—key goals of the proposed solution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study, focusing on the geographical challenges faced by the students residing in mountainous regions of Naguilian, La Union, in accessing education during and after natural hazards. Using spatial analysis and community insights, the study proposes transitional learning hubs as a resilient solution to address these disruptions. The results highlight the significance of disaster-resilient, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable designs in ensuring continuous educational access while fostering local empowerment.

Table 1

Mountainous Barangays in Naguilian, La Union Affected by Natural Hazards That Hinder Student Access to Education

Barangay	Number of students (n)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Mamat-ing Norte	146	136	93.15
Bimmotobot	121	115	95.04
Gusing Norte	139	133	95.68
Casilagan	363	293	80.72
San Antonio	129	120	88.89
Al-Alinao Sur	135	125	92.59
Balebec	177	171	96.61
San Isidro	181	166	91.71

Mirzaei's (2019) study emphasizes that students living in mountainous areas face significant challenges during natural hazards, primarily due to the risks associated with traveling to school. The unpredictable occurrence of natural hazards frequently disrupts their access to education, making it harder for them to attend classes and engage in learning compared to students in lowland areas. As Table 1 illustrates, all barangays located in the mountainous region of Naguilian, La Union, have a high percentage of students facing limited access to school during and after natural hazards, underscoring the study's emphasis on the urgent need for resilient and accessible learning hubs. These findings highlight the widespread impact of natural hazards on education in the region, underscoring the importance of prioritizing safe, sustainable solutions to ensure educational continuity for affected students.

The following tables highlight the different natural hazards encountered by the students living in different barangays located in the mountainous region of Naguilian, La Union, which these natural hazards limit their access to school.

Legend

- a. Landslides
- b. Flooded roads or pathways
- c. Damaged bridges or infrastructure
- d. Eroded or muddy trails
- e. Long and unsafe travel routes

Table 2

Barangay Mamat-ing Norte

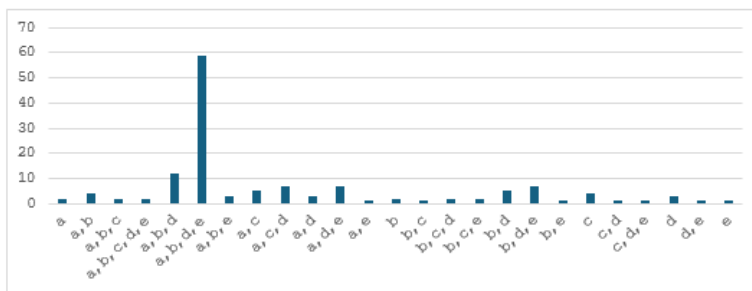


Table 2 shows that 40.41% of students in Brgy. Mamat-ing Norte is unable to attend classes during natural hazards due to landslides, flooded roads or pathways, eroded or muddy trails, and long, unsafe travel routes.

Table 3

Barangay Bimmotobot

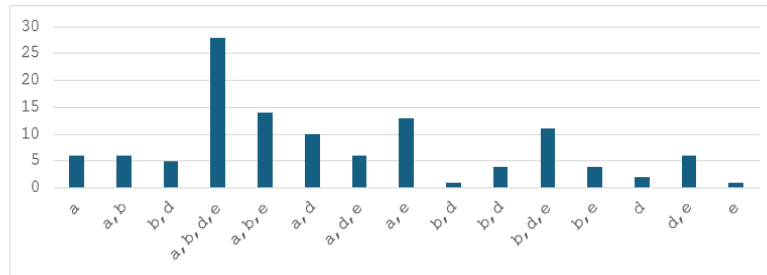


Table 3 shows that 23.14% of students in Brgy. Bimmotobots are unable to attend classes during natural hazards, with landslides, flooded roads or pathways, eroded or muddy trails, and long, unsafe travel routes posing significant challenges.

Table 4

Barangay Gusing Norte

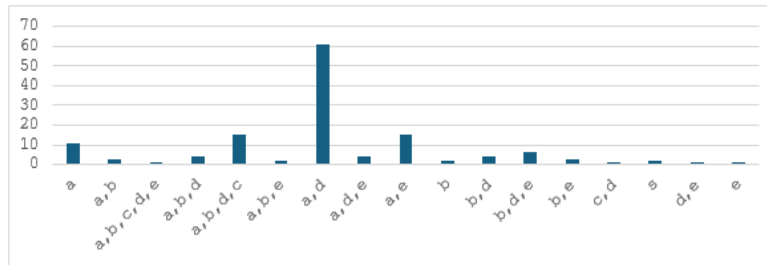


Table 4 shows that landslides and eroded or muddy trails prevent 44.4% of students in Brgy. Gusing Norte from attending classes during natural hazards.

Table 5

Barangay Casilagan

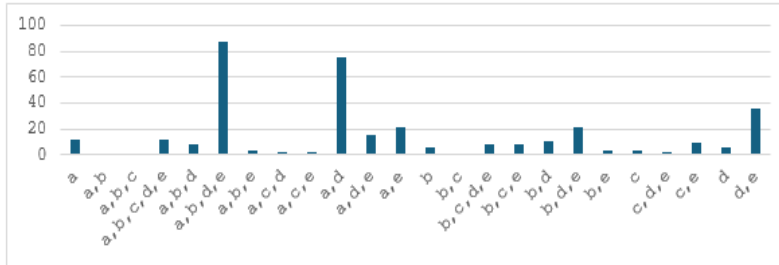


Table 5 shows that 24.24% of students in Brgy. Casilagan is unable to attend classes during natural hazards due to landslides, flooded roads or pathways, eroded or muddy trails, and long, unsafe travel routes.

Table 6

Barangay San Antonio

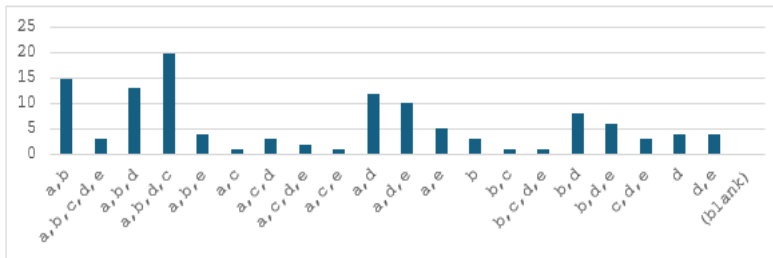


Table 6 shows that 15.5% of students in barangay San Antonio are unable to attend classes during typhoons due to hazards such as landslides, flooded roads or pathways, eroded or muddy trails, and damaged bridges, resulting in missed learning opportunities and hindering their educational progress.

Table 7
Barangay Al-Alinao Sur

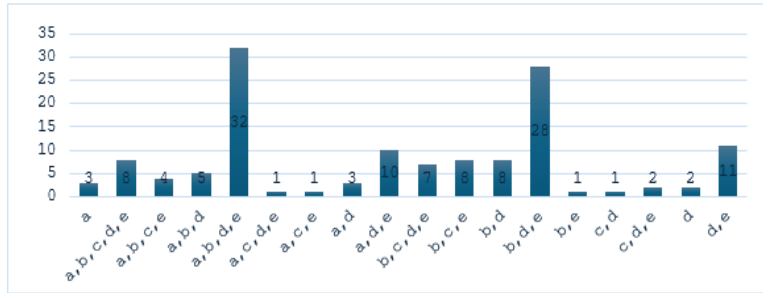


Table 7 shows that 23.70% of students in Brgy. Al-Alinao Sur is unable to attend classes during natural hazards due to landslides, flooded roads or pathways, eroded or muddy trails, and long, unsafe travel routes.

Table 8
Barangay Balebec

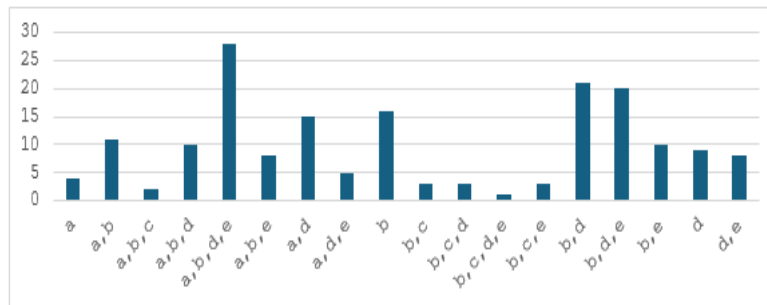


Table 8 shows that 15.82% of students in Brgy. Balebec is unable to attend classes during natural hazards due to landslides, flooded roads or pathways, eroded or muddy trails, and long, unsafe travel routes.

Table 9

Barangay San Isidro

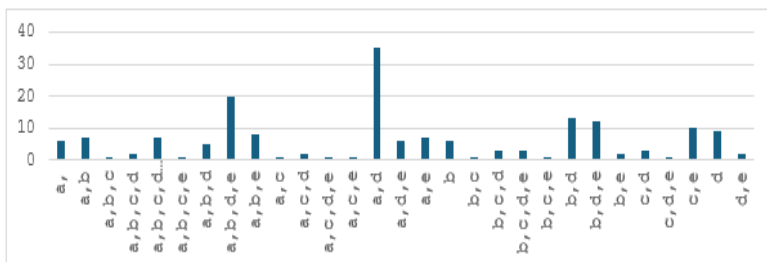


Table 9 shows that 44.88% of students in Brgy. San Isidro is unable to attend classes during natural hazards due to landslides and eroded or muddy trails.

Tables 2 to 9 reveal that the majority of the eight barangay studies face significant challenges in ensuring students' access to education during natural hazards. Five barangays—Casilagan, Bimmotobot, Mamat-ing Norte, Balebec, and Al-Alinao Sur—experience landslides, flooded roads, eroded trails, and unsafe travel routes. Two barangays, Gusing Norte and San Isidro, primarily encounter landslides and eroded trails. Only students in Barangay San Antonio face the additional risk of damaged bridges and infrastructure. These hazards pose serious risks to students, including injury and potential loss of life, as highlighted by Mirzaei (2019). Such disruptions to education are particularly concerning in the Philippines, where natural disasters frequently endanger lives and disrupt the school calendar, especially for students in mountainous areas (Symaco, 2013).

The impact of natural hazards on students' performance and overall educational progress

Figure 1. Shows the response of teachers in Naguilian, La Union, about the effect of frequent disruption of natural hazards on the academic performance of the students residing in mountainous areas.

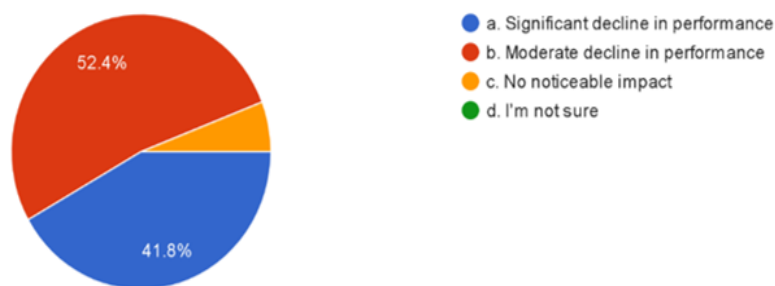


Figure 1 illustrates that out of 170 teachers in Naguilian, La Union, a significant portion reported a decline in student performance due to natural hazards. Specifically, 71 teachers (41.8%) observed a significant decline, 89 teachers (52.4%) noted a moderate decline, and only 10 teachers (5.9%) reported an unnoticeable impact. This data highlights the substantial effect that natural hazards can have on the academic performance of students in mountainous regions. For example, when landslides block roads or floods inundate communities, students' regular attendance and learning are disrupted, leading to a decline in their performance (Potter et al., 2020).

Figure 2

Teachers' Observations on Learning Gaps Among Students in Naguilian, La Union Due to Missed Lessons Following Natural Hazard Events

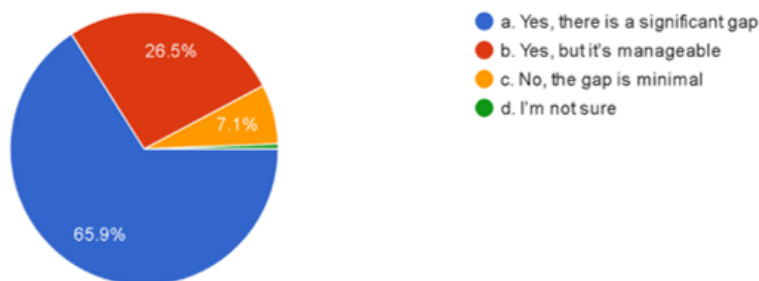


Figure 2 illustrates that a majority of teachers in Naguilian, La Union, perceive a significant gap in students' knowledge following natural hazard events. Of the 170 teachers surveyed, 112 (65.9%) reported a significant gap in students' knowledge due to missed lessons, while 45 (26.5%) observed a manageable gap. A smaller portion, 12 teachers (7.1%),

identified minimal gaps, and only one teacher (0.6%) was not sure. This data underscores the challenges faced by students in mountainous areas, where natural hazards can disrupt their educational trajectories. Seasonal disruptions, such as floods or landslides, can prevent students from attending school, causing them to miss critical lessons and fall behind in their studies. This disparity in educational access can lead to widening gaps in academic performance and long-term educational outcomes (Boer & Asino, 2022).

Figure 3. Shows the response of teachers teaching in Naguilian, La Union, about how long it typically takes for students residing in mountainous areas to catch up on their missed lessons after natural hazard disruptions.

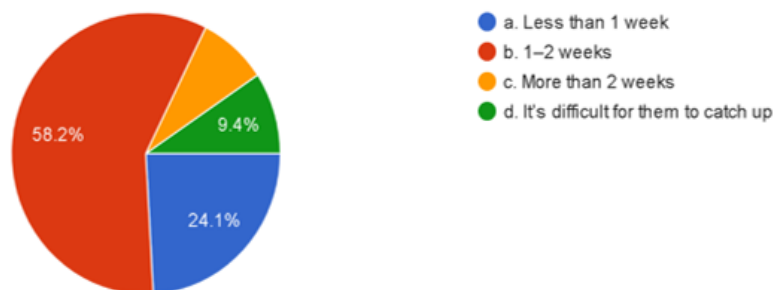


Figure 3 shows that a majority of teachers in Naguilian, La Union, believe it takes students one to two weeks to catch up on missed lessons after a natural hazard event. Of the 170 teachers surveyed, 99 (58.2%) estimated one to two weeks, while 41 (24.1%) estimated less than one week. However, a significant minority, 16 teachers (9.4%), felt it was difficult for students to catch up, and 14 (8.2%) estimated it would take more than two weeks.

Figure 4. Shows the response of the students residing in mountainous areas of Naguilian, La Union, about how long it typically takes for them to catch up on their missed lessons after natural hazard disruptions.

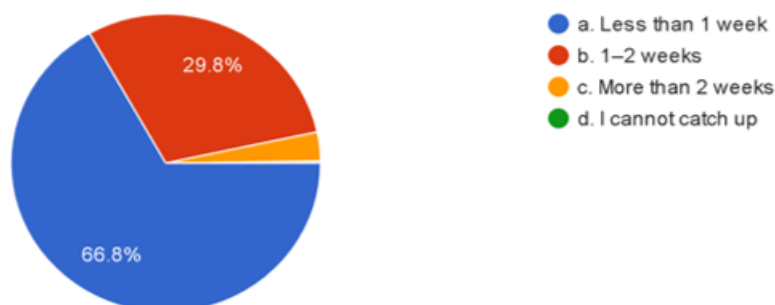


Figure 4 presents the students' perspectives, with 936 out of 1,401 students (66.8%) reporting that they can catch up on missed lessons within a week. In contrast, 418 students (29.8%) estimated it takes one to two weeks, and 44 students (3.1%) said it takes more than two weeks. Only three students (0.2%) felt they could not catch up. These findings highlight the discrepancy between teachers' and students' perceptions of the time required to recover from learning disruptions. While students tend to be more optimistic, a significant proportion of teachers express concern about the difficulty students face in catching up, especially after prolonged disruptions. This aligns with research indicating that students in mountainous regions often miss significant class time due to natural hazards (Uzenova et al., 2019; Wherli, 2014). When forced to miss school, students struggle to catch up, leading to academic setbacks and widening learning gaps (Uzdenova et al., 2019). Furthermore, the psychological impact of natural disasters, including stress, anxiety, and depression, can hinder students' ability to engage with their studies effectively (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Atlam et al., 2021).

Figure 5

Student Responses from Mountainous Areas of Naguilian, La Union on the Impact of Frequent Natural Hazard Disruptions on Their Learning

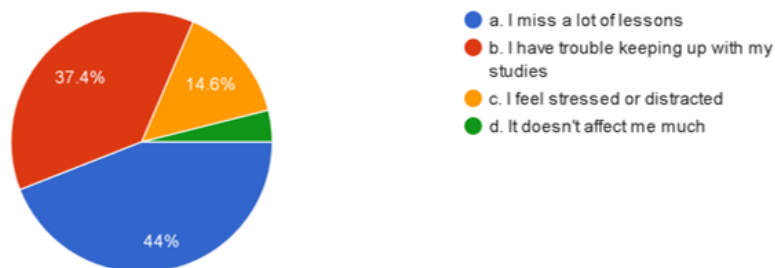


Figure 5 illustrates that out of 1,401 students residing in mountainous areas of Naguilian, La Union, 617 students which are 44% responded that they missed a lot of lessons due to natural hazards, 524 students, which are 37.4%, responded that they have trouble keeping up with their studies, 205 students, which are 14.6%, responded that they feel stressed or distracted. In comparison, 55 students, which is 3.9%, responded that it does not affect them much. The prevalence of natural hazards in mountainous regions poses a significant challenge to students' education, as it often leads to missed lessons and gaps in their knowledge. These regions are highly susceptible to various natural disasters, which can disrupt the normal functioning of schools and prevent students from attending classes (Uzdenova et al., 2019).

Figure 6

Student Responses from Mountainous Areas of Naguilian, La Union on Experiencing Grade Declines Due to Natural Hazards

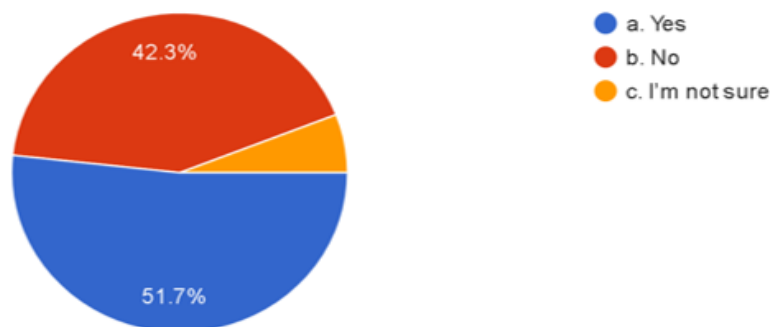


Figure 6 shows that a majority of the 1,401 students surveyed in mountainous areas of Naguilian, La Union, believe that natural hazards significantly affect their grades. Specifically,

725 students (51.7%) reported a significant drop in their grades due to natural hazards. In comparison, 593 students (42.3%) reported no significant drop, and 83 students (5.9%) were unsure.

These findings highlight the vulnerability of students living far from their schools to the academic consequences of natural disasters. When events like floods, earthquakes, or landslides occur, these students face greater challenges in attending school due to damaged infrastructure, road closures, or safety concerns, ultimately leading to a drop in their academic performance (Koerniadi et al., 2015; Ekuase-Anwansedo et al., 2021). For example, a landslide might block the only road to a remote school, preventing students from attending for an extended period. Additionally, the emotional and psychological stress of dealing with the aftermath of a natural disaster can negatively impact a student's ability to focus on their studies (Atlam et al., 2021).

Optimal location for the learning hubs that ensures student accessibility and safety while minimizing exposure to natural hazards, considering student proximity and geographical data

Students residing in mountainous areas of Naguilian, La Union, face significant challenges in accessing educational resources, particularly during natural disasters and other emergencies. Figure 7 illustrates the geographic contribution of these 1,927 students, highlighting the need for strategically placed community-based learning hubs to bridge the gap in school accessibility.

Hence, community learning hubs offer a promising solution to ensure that students in remote areas have continued access to education during crises. These hubs can provide safe and accessible spaces for learning, even when schools are closed or inaccessible. The importance of learning hubs became even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced a rapid transition to emergency remote learning. This abrupt shift presented significant difficulties for students and educators in areas with limited access to technology and infrastructure. For

students in remote, mountainous regions, proximity to emergency learning hubs is critical for ensuring continued education (Bashir et al., 2021).

The proximity of learning hubs to students' residences is a key factor in their effectiveness. When hubs are located close to where students live, they can access these resources more easily, even during emergencies. This is particularly important in mountainous areas, where travel can be challenging and hazardous, especially during natural hazards. As UNICEF (2013) emphasizes, proximity should be a central consideration in the design and implementation of learning hubs.

GIS can be used to analyze students' residential locations and identify optimal sites for learning hubs. By prioritizing areas with high concentrations of students and minimizing travel distances, the hubs can serve as accessible and inclusive spaces for learning continuity during emergencies.

A data-driven approach to site selection, combined with a focus on proximity, can significantly improve the effectiveness of learning hubs in Naguilian, La Union. This approach not only addresses immediate educational needs during crises but also contributes to the long-term resilience of the educational system in disaster-prone regions. By investing in strategically placed learning hubs, Naguilian can ensure that all students have access to quality education, regardless of the challenges they may face.

Figure 7

Mapping the Locations of Students Residing in Mountainous Areas of Naguilian, La Union, Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

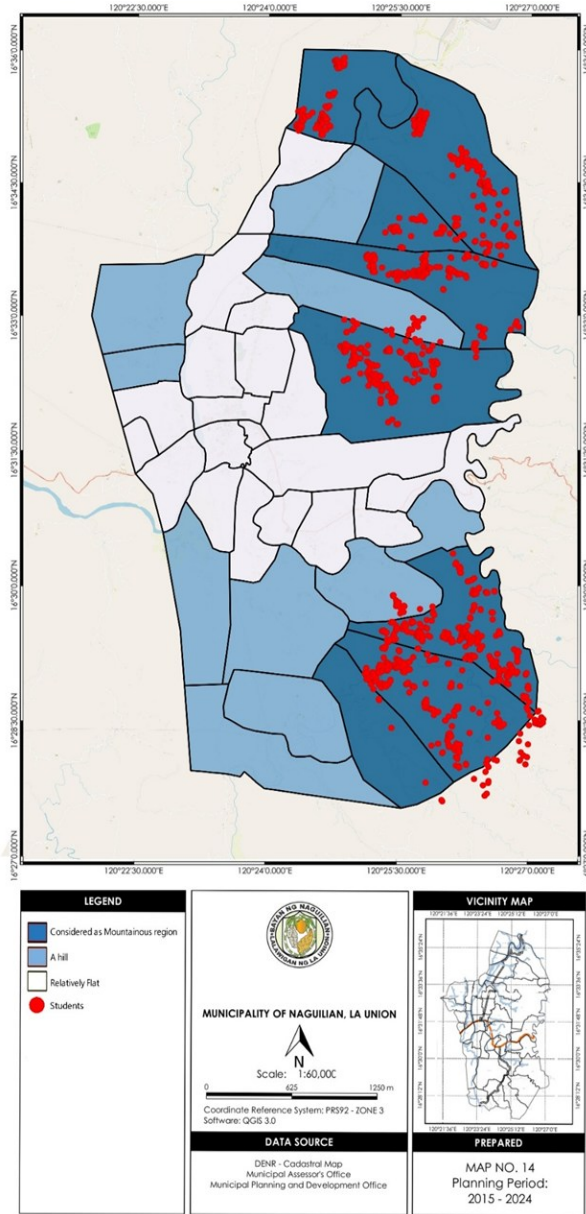


Figure 8

GIS Mapping of Proposed Learning Hubs in Mountainous Areas of Naguilian, La Union

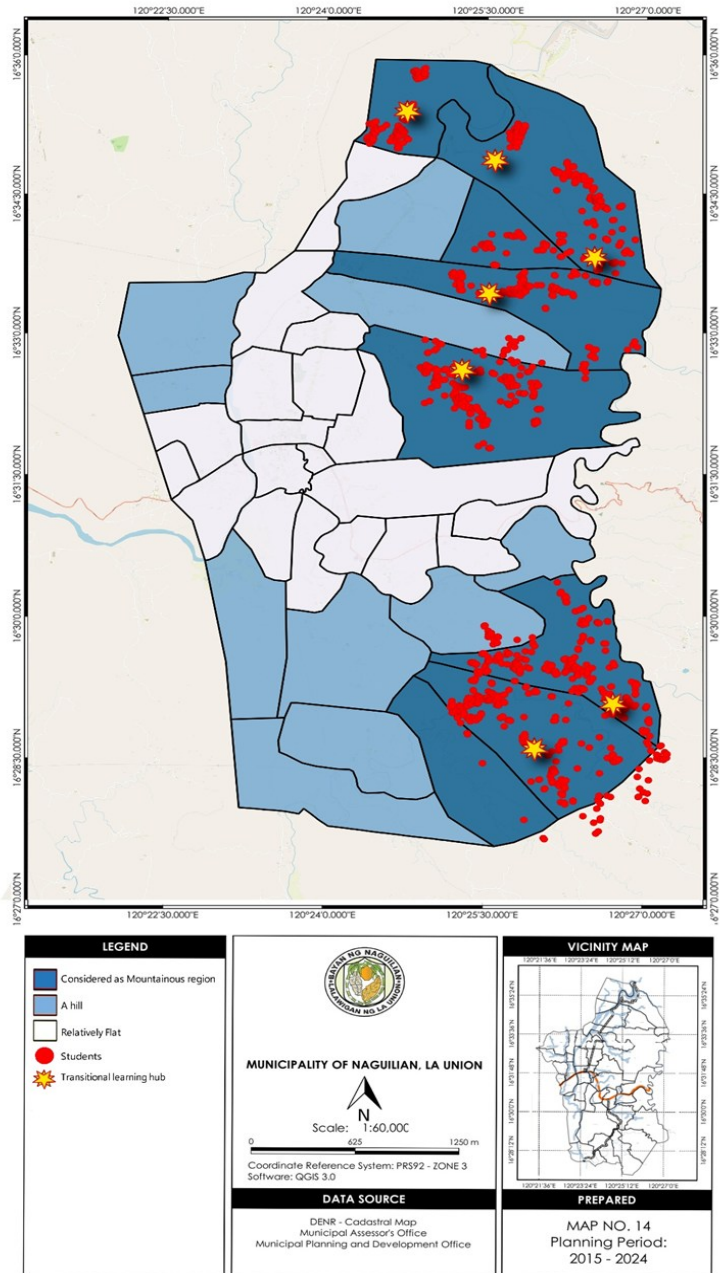


Figure 9

Proposed Transitional Learning Hubs Mapped on the Geo-Hazard Map of Naguilian, La Union

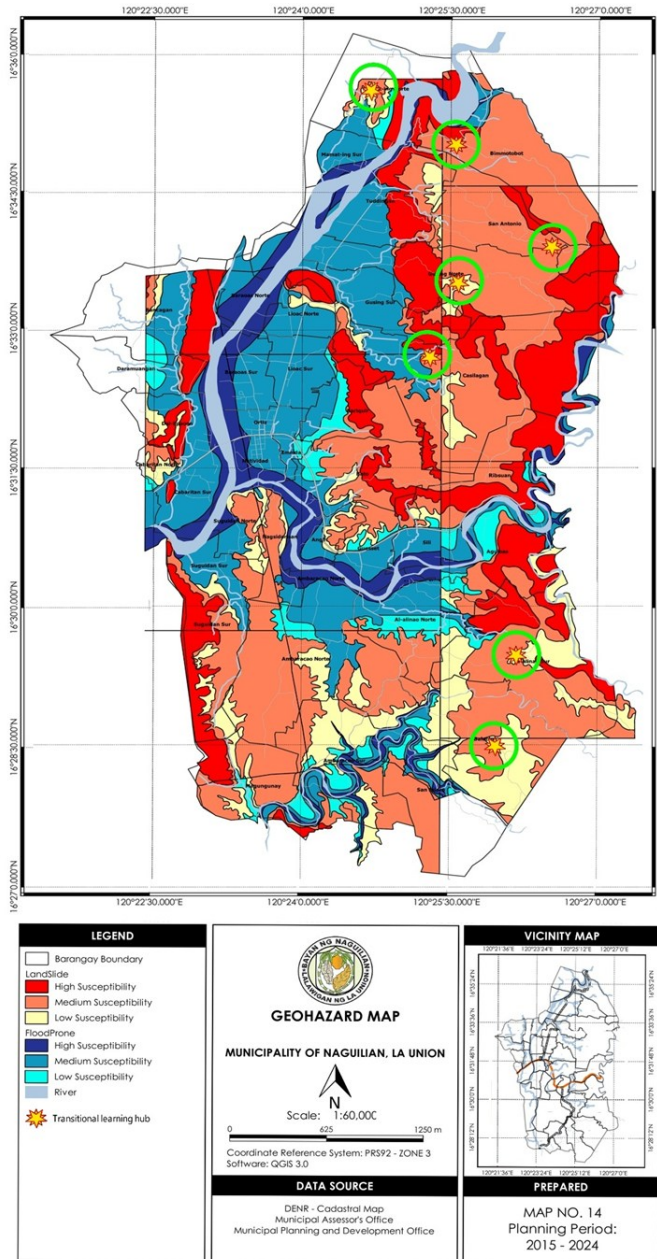


Figure 10

Proposed Transitional Learning Hubs Mapped on the CLUP of Naguilian, La Union

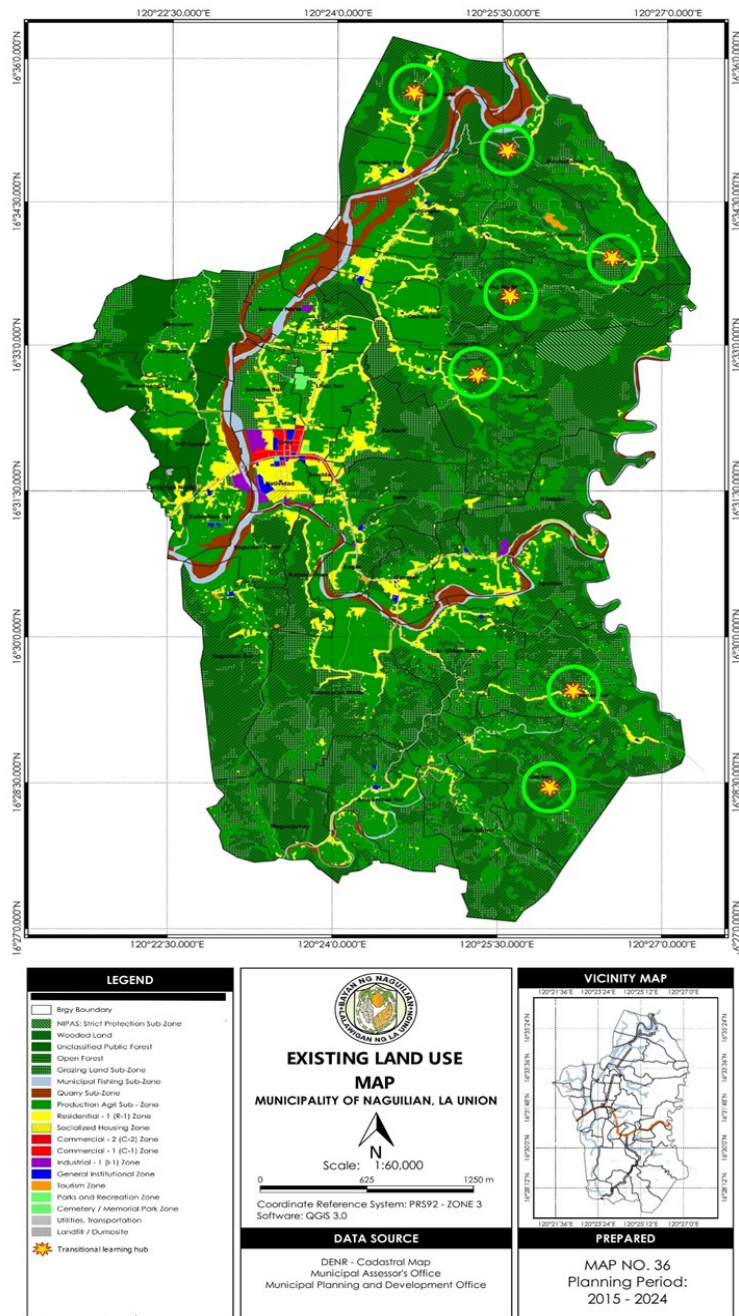
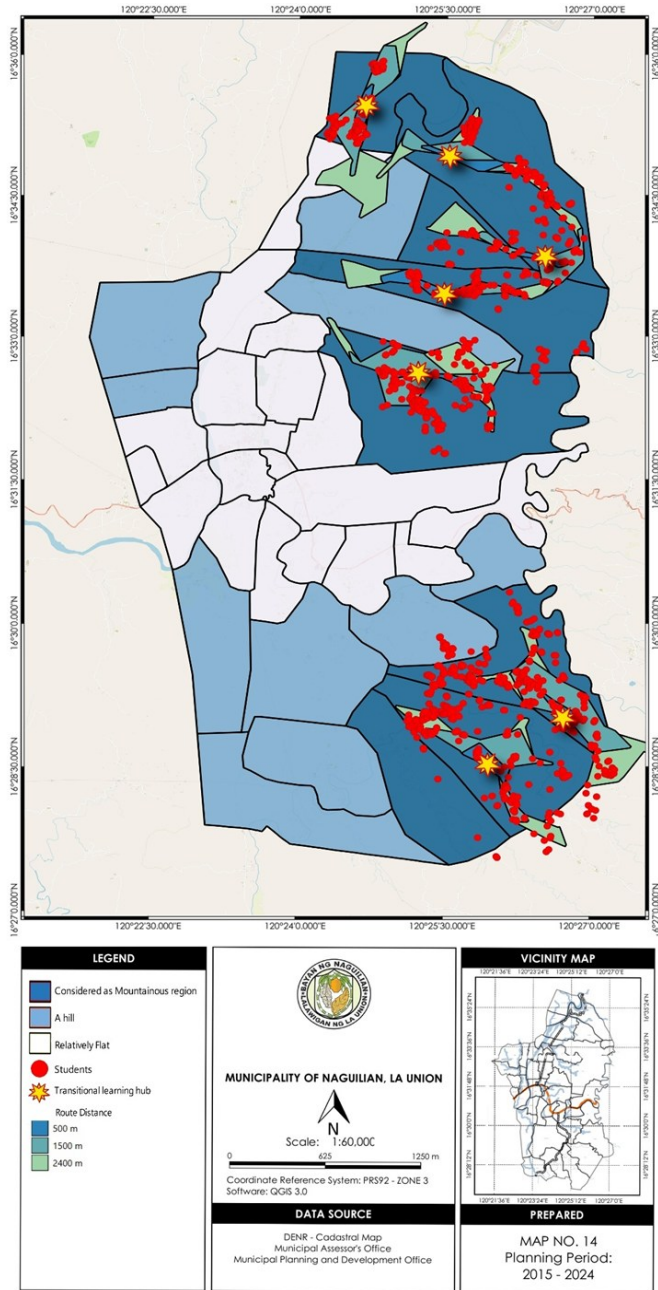


Figure 11

Student-to-Learning Hub Distances Mapped Using Open Route Service (ORS) in GIS



Figures 8 to 11 illustrate the proposed locations for the transitional learning hubs, a critical aspect of the study. These hubs aim to provide safe and accessible learning spaces for students, particularly during emergencies. Identifying suitable locations required careful consideration, ensuring that each hub is walkable, accessible, and situated in an area with low susceptibility to hazards such as flooding and landslides. To confirm the safety and suitability of the proposed locations, they were overlaid onto the geohazard map and Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) Map of Naguilian. This analysis verified their resilience to natural hazards and confirmed their compliance with land use regulations.

Table 10

Assessment of Flooding and Landslide Susceptibility at Each Proposed Transitional Learning Hub

LEARNING HUB	SUSCEPTIBILITY LANDSLIDE	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO FLOODING	LAND USE
Learning Hub 1	Low	Not Susceptible	Agricultural
Learning Hub 2	Medium	Not Susceptible	Agricultural
Learning Hub 3	Medium	Not Susceptible	Agricultural
Learning Hub 4	Low	Not Susceptible	Agricultural
Learning Hub 5	Medium	Not Susceptible	Agricultural
Learning Hub 6	Low	Not Susceptible	Agricultural
Learning Hub 7	Low	Not Susceptible	Agricultural

Table 10 reveals that four out of ten proposed transitional learning hub locations are in areas with low susceptibility to landslides and are not susceptible to flooding. However, three out of the seven hubs are located in areas with medium susceptibility to landslides and also not susceptible to flooding. Relocating these three hubs to areas with lower susceptibility to landslides could potentially reduce accessibility for students, as the hubs would be farther away and not within walking distance. The remaining hub, also located in an area with medium landslide susceptibility, is situated in a barangay with both medium and high landslide-prone areas. This presents a challenge in balancing the need for accessibility with the need for safety, a key consideration highlighted in UNICEF's (2013)

guidelines for building transitional learning spaces. These guidelines emphasize the importance of proximity to ensure that students facing difficulties accessing education after natural hazard events can reach these hubs easily.

Figure 11, generated using the Open Routes Servies (ORS) tool in GIS, shows the distances between the transitional learning hubs and the majority of the students they will serve, ranging from 500 meters to 2,400 meters (2.4 kilometers). This range falls within the commonly accepted notion of an ideal walkable distance, which is approximately 2.4 kilometers or a 25 -minute walk (Seneviratne, 1985; Olszewski & Wibowo, 2005). By ensuring that the hubs are located within this walkable distance, the project aims to maximize accessibility for students while also considering their safety by selecting locations with low susceptibility to natural hazards.

Table 12

Shows the Total Number of Students the Learning Hubs Will Serve

LEARNING HUB	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	LOCATION OF LEARNING HUB
Learning Hub 1	146	Mamat-ing Norte
Learning Hub 2	99	Bimmotobot
Learning Hub 3	196	San Antonio
Learning Hub 4	191	Gusing Norte
Learning Hub 5	420	Casilagan
Learning Hub 6	320	Al-Alinao Sur
Learning Hub 7	395	Balecbe

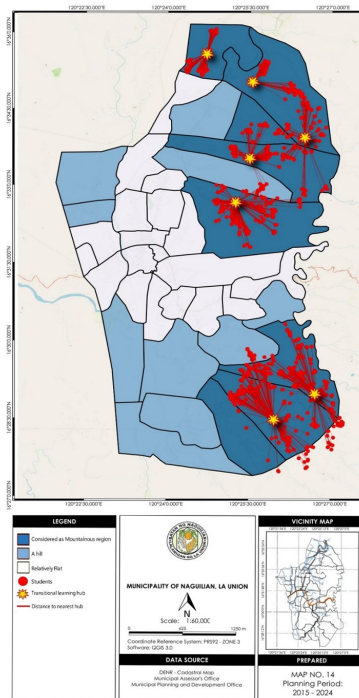
Figure 12 illustrates the final scope of each transitional learning hub. At the same time, Table 11 provides the total number of students assigned to each hub across different barangays. The distribution of students varies across the hubs, ranging from 99 students in TLH 2 (Bimmotobot) to 420 students in TLH 5 (Casilagan). This variation reflects differences in population density and the geographic area served by each hub. Accurately identifying the total number of students per hub is crucial for planning purposes.

As Hussey and Smith (2010) highlight, a detailed analysis of the projected student population is essential to guide the appropriate sizing of the hubs. This involves evaluating enrollment data across various age groups and academic levels to ensure that the hubs can accommodate all learners. Furthermore, Sweigart and Evanovich (2015) emphasize the importance of understanding the diverse needs of the student population when designing transitional learning hubs. This includes considering factors such as access to technology, learning styles, and any special educational needs.

By accurately identifying the total number of students per hub and understanding their diverse needs, planners can ensure appropriate resource allocation and infrastructure planning. This will enable the development of transitional learning hubs that provide a seamless and supportive educational experience for all students, regardless of their academic level or background.

Figure 12

Student Coverage Areas Determined by Distance to Nearest Hub in GIS



Facilities and Areas to be incorporated in the proposed Transitional Learning Center

Figure 13

Students' Preferences for Facilities in Proposed Transitional Learning Hubs in Naguilian's Mountainous Areas

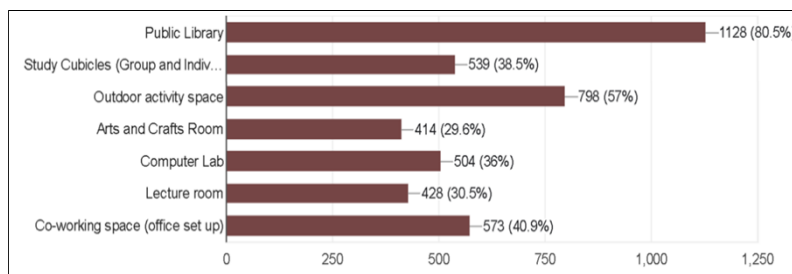


Figure 13 presents student preferences for various features to be integrated into the proposed learning hubs. The most popular preference was a public library, with 80% of the 1,401 students surveyed (1128 students) expressing their desire for this feature. Following closely, 57% (798 students) preferred an outdoor activity space, while 40.9% (573 students) favored a co-working space. Other popular preferences included study cubicles for individual and group activities (38.5% or 539 students), a computer lab (36% or 504 students), and a lecture room (30.5% or 428 students). The least popular preference was an arts and crafts room, with 29.6% (414 students) expressing interest.

Understanding these preferences is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness of the learning hubs and meeting the diverse needs of the students. As Motevalli et al. (2020) emphasize, aligning the hub's offerings with student needs can significantly influence their motivation to learn and engage with the resources provided. By incorporating these preferences into the design and development of the learning hubs, planners can create spaces that foster a positive and productive learning environment for all students.

Vernacular Architecture in Naguilian, La Union

Through casual and informal interviews with residents, students, and barangay officials, bamboo was identified as a

viable local construction material for the proposed project. Its abundance and wide distribution throughout the barangay make it easily accessible and sustainable for construction purposes. Furthermore, the community's familiarity with bamboo enhances its practicality for the project.

Knowledge Gap in Bamboo Construction Techniques

While bamboo is an abundant and sustainable material, the interviews also revealed a lack of standardized or well-defined construction techniques for building bamboo structures within the mountainous barangays of Naguilian, La Union. Specifically, the locals have minimal understanding of critical processes such as bamboo treatment, which is essential for enhancing the material's durability, resistance to pests, and overall structural integrity. As a result, their bamboo constructions are often more vulnerable to wear, decay, and environmental factors, leading to a shorter lifespan and reduced resilience.

Targeted Training Programs for Sustainable Bamboo Construction

This knowledge gap underscores the need for targeted training and education programs to equip the community with the necessary skills and techniques for sustainable and effective bamboo construction practices. By providing training on proper bamboo treatment, construction techniques, and design considerations, the community can harness the full potential of bamboo as a durable and sustainable building material.

Types of Bamboo Available in Naguilian, La Union

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Region 1, the types of bamboo available in Naguilian, La Union are 'Bayog' (*Bambusa spinosa*) and 'Kawayang Tinik' (*Bambusa blumeana*).

- **Bayog:** This species thrives near water bodies and has long been utilized for construction and other purposes due to its ability to tolerate fluctuations in salinity and water availability.

Kawayang Tinik: This prominent bamboo species is characterized by its impressive size and strength, making it suitable for use as primary structural members in traditional bamboo houses.

Both Bayog and Kawayang Tinik have been traditionally used in the Philippines for various applications, including construction, furniture, and handicrafts. A deeper understanding of their properties and appropriate treatment methods will enable the community to construct more durable, resilient, and sustainable structures using these readily available resources.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN SOLUTION

Programmatic and Design Concept

The programmatic and design concepts of this project serve as the fundamental framework that guides the entire development process, starting from the initial conceptualization and schematic drawings to the detailed and precise architectural drawings.

Site Analysis

Plate No.1

Site analysis of Transitional Learning Hub One (1) located in barangay Mamat-ing Norte.

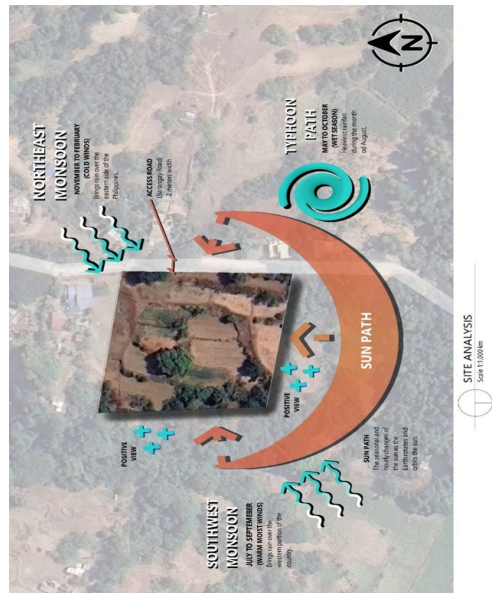


Plate No.2

Site Analysis of Transitional Learning Hub Two (2) Located in Barangay Bimmotobot

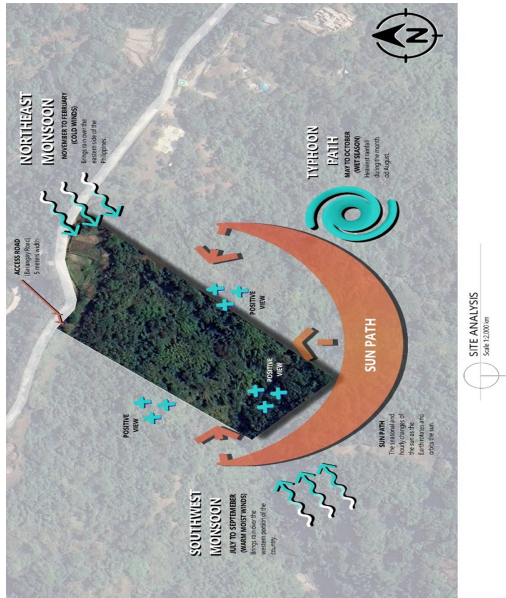


Plate No.3

Site Analysis of Transitional Learning Hub Three (3) Located in Barangay San Antonio

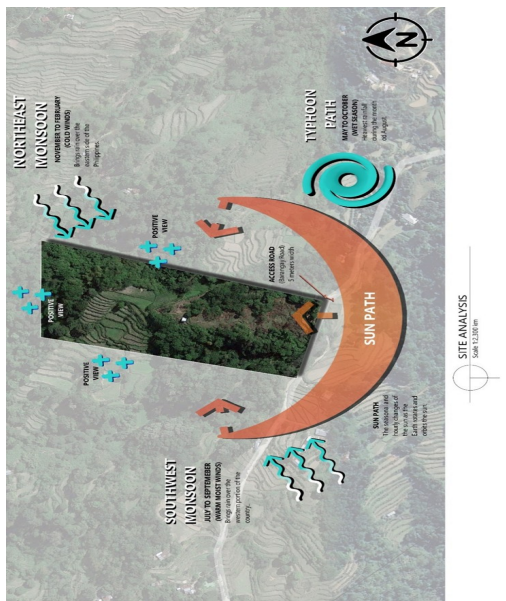


Plate No.4

Site Analysis Of Transitional Learning Hub Four (4) Located in Barangay Gusing Norte

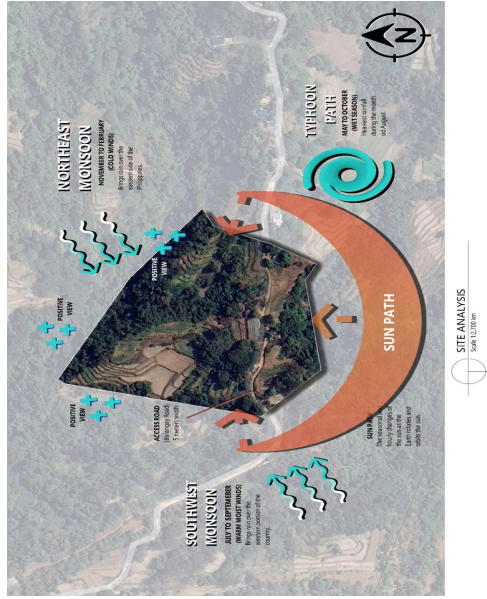


Plate No.5

Site Analysis of Transitional Learning Hub Five (5), Located in Barangay Casilagan

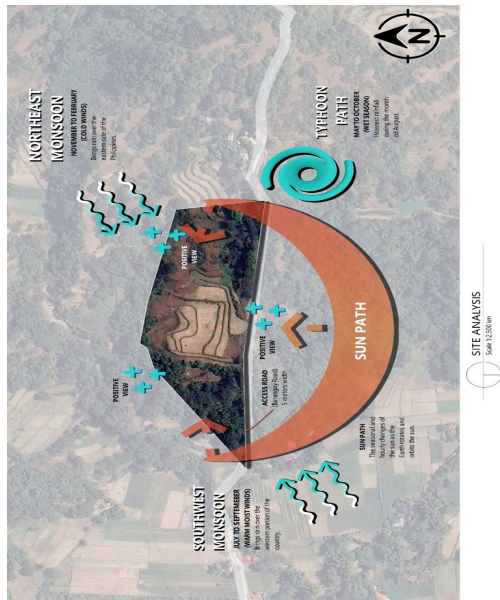


Plate No.6

Site Analysis of Transitional Learning Hub Six (6) Located in Barangay Al -Alinao Sur

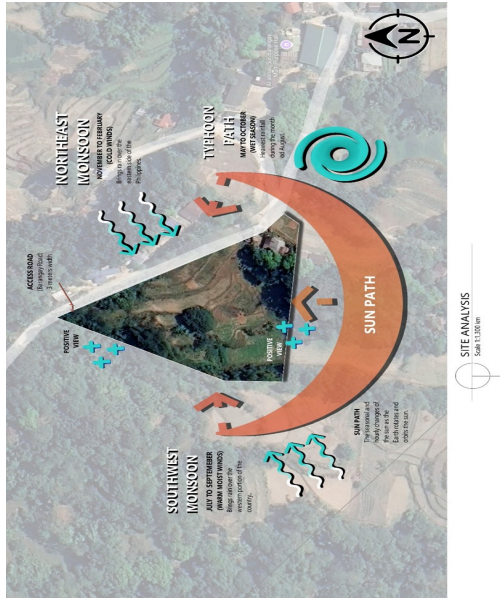


Plate No.7

Site Analysis of Transitional Learning Hub Seven(7), Located in Barangay Balebec

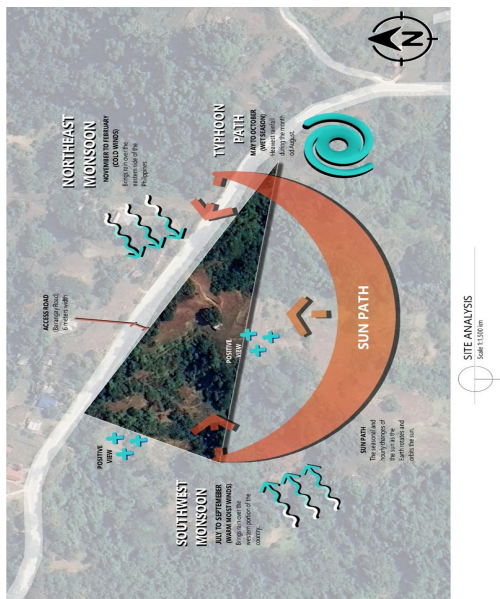


Plate No.8

Vicinity Map, Site Located in Barangay Casilagan

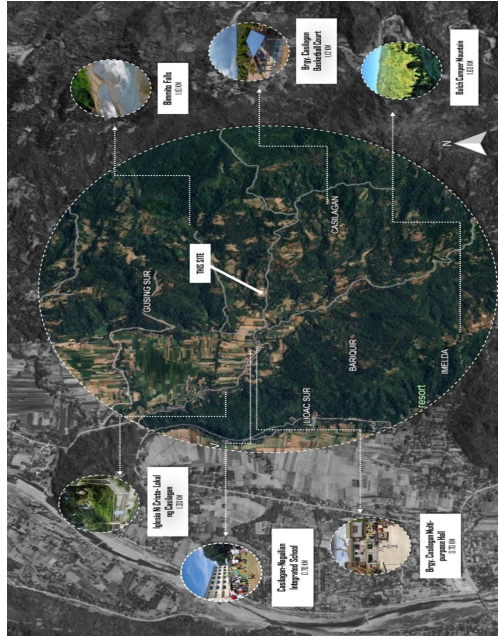


Plate No. 9.

Site Development Plan ,located in Barangay Casilagan



Plate No.10

Transitional Learning Hub Floor Plan

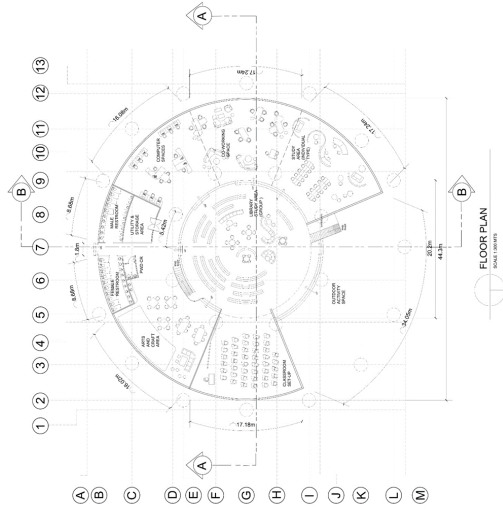


Plate No.11

Front Elevation and Rear Elevation of the Transitional Learning Hub

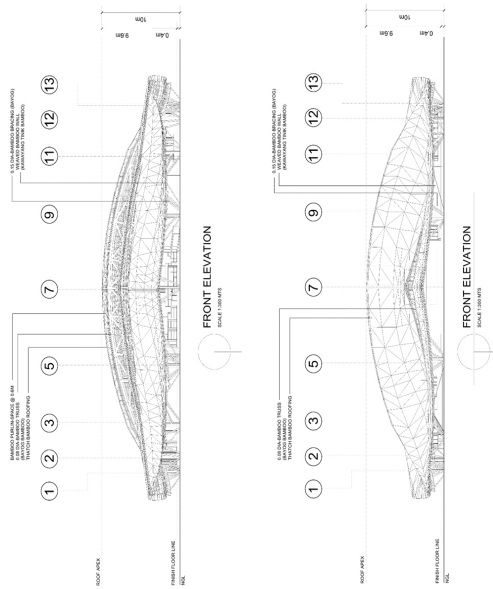


Plate No.12

Right Side View and Left Side View of the Transitional Learning Hub

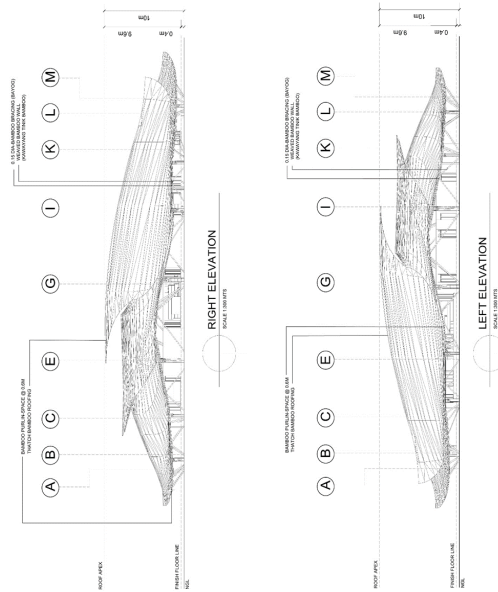


Plate No. 13

Section thru A and B of the Transitional Learning Hub

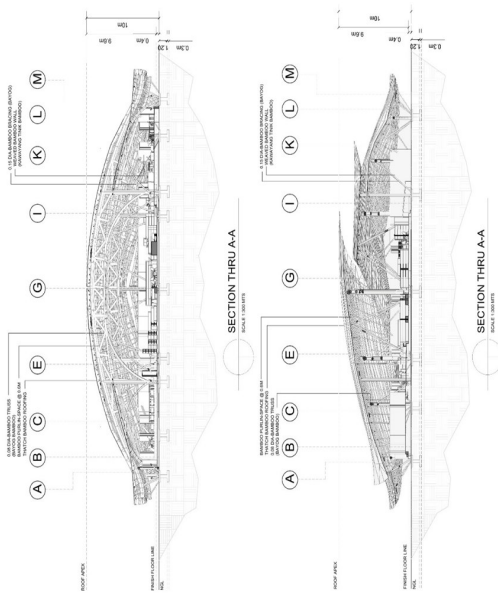


Plate No. 14

Exterior Perspective of Transitional Learning Hub



Plate No. 15

Interior Views of Study Area 1 Featuring Learning, Co-Working, Computer, and Arts & Craft Zones



Plate No. 16

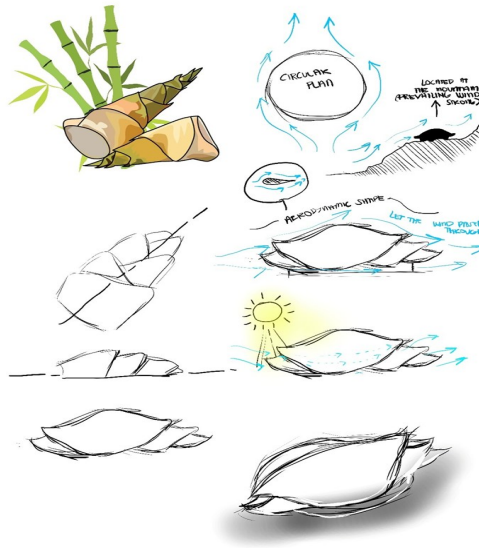
Views of the Lecture Room, Public Library Interiors, and Outdoor Activity Space



ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPTUAL DETAIL

Plate No. 17

Design Conceptualization

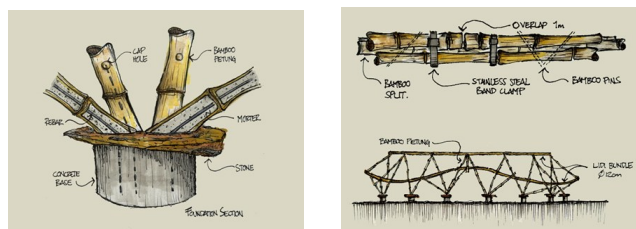


The municipality of Naguilian, composed of large terrains, is rich in bamboo species, particularly Bayog and Kawayang Tinik, which are widely used for construction and craftsmanship in other places. The design concept of the Transitional Learning Hub originates from the bamboo shoot, inspired by the natural characteristics of bamboo; the structure embodies flexibility, strength, and adaptability—qualities essential for a learning hub located in a disaster-prone area of the municipality. Drawing from the organic form of a bamboo shoot, the architecture incorporates layered, tapering structures that mimic its natural segmentation. In the illustration below, passive cooling is applied, letting the air enter the building and pass through, enhancing natural ventilation and thermal comfort. As the main approach of the project is **community architecture and vernacular architecture**, the design prioritizes locally sourced materials and participatory design processes to ensure that the transitional learning hub is both culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable. By integrating **Bayog** and **Kawayang Tinik**—native bamboo species abundant in Naguilian—the structure reduces its environmental footprint. It strengthens the connection between the built environment and the local community. The use of bamboo in various architectural elements, such as structural framing, walls, and shading devices, enhances durability while maintaining a lightweight and flexible composition, making it resilient to earthquakes and strong winds.

Structural Systems

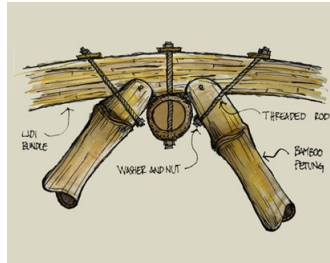
Figure 1

Conceptual Structural Systems of the Transitional Learning Hub



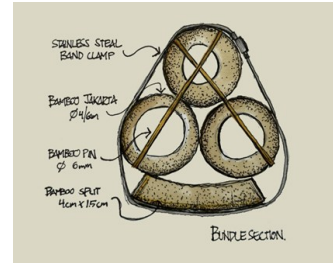
(a)

Foundation Design: Integrating Bamboo and Concrete for Structural Stability (Bamboo U, 2024)



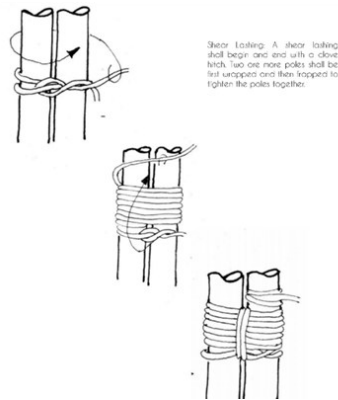
(b)

Connection between columns (Bamboo U, 2024)



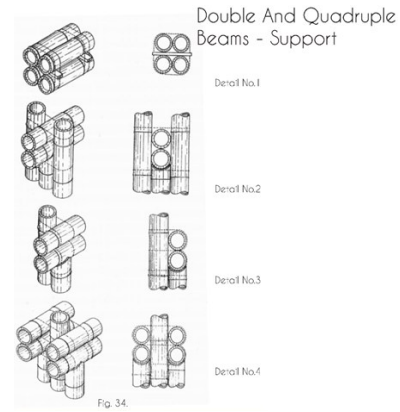
(c)

Secure Bundling Techniques for Gridshell Construction (Bamboo U, 2024)



(d)

Shear lashing, joining of column and truss (Vaghela, 2013).



(e)

Double and Quadruple Beams-Support (Vaghela, 2013).

a. Foundation Design: Integrating Bamboo and Concrete for Structural Stability

The foundation system integrates Bayog bamboo columns with steel reinforcement bars inside, enhancing load-bearing capacity while maintaining sustainability and aesthetics. The bamboo is securely anchored to a concrete base, with cap holes for mortar infusion, ensuring resilience against wind and seismic forces. To prevent moisture-related degradation, large river stones are embedded between the bamboo and concrete, acting as a protective barrier. This hybrid approach maximizes

the strengths of both bamboo and concrete, creating a durable and structurally sound base for the bamboo dome (Bamboo U, 2024).

b. Connection between columns

This connection is essential for maintaining the integrity and stability of the dome structure, ensuring that the loads are efficiently transferred and distributed. At the heart of the connection is a threaded rod, which serves as a central anchoring point, holding the various components together securely. This rod runs through a central washer and nut, preventing any loosening under stress (Bamboo U, 2024).

c. Secure Bundling Techniques

This structural detail illustrates the method for creating continuous bamboo bundles, which is essential for constructing the grid shell of a bamboo dome. The bamboo culms are overlapped by one meter to ensure a strong and stable connection that can extend to the desired length. The overlapping sections are secured using bamboo pins, which are driven through pre-drilled diagonal holes. These pins provide a traditional and effective means of fastening, leveraging the natural strength of bamboo to create a seamless connection between segments (Bamboo U, 2024).

d. Shear lashing, joining of column and truss

Shear lashing is a traditional binding technique used to securely join two or more bamboo elements, such as columns and trusses, in bamboo construction. This method ensures structural stability, load distribution, and flexibility, making it particularly effective in earthquake-resistant and typhoon-resilient structures (Vaghela, 2013).

e. Double and Quadruple Beams-Support

In bamboo architecture, double and quadruple-beam support systems are used to enhance load-bearing capacity, distribute weight efficiently, and improve structural stability.

These methods are particularly effective in spanning large areas, supporting heavy loads, and reinforcing critical structural joints (Vaghela,2013).

Main Building Material

Figure 2

Actual Image of Bayog A Bamboo Species Abundant in the Municipality of Naguilian



BAYOG

In the Philippines, an endemic bamboo species called Bayog (*Bambusa spinosa*) has long been used for construction. This bamboo species can be found throughout the country, especially near water bodies, and it tolerates changes in salinity and seasonal fluctuations in water availability. It had been called with many scientific names, such as *Bambusa blumeana luzonensis* and *Dendrocalamus merillana*, among others. However, across the county, it is commonly known as Bayog. Bayog has many characteristics similar to the popular *Bambusa blumeana* (Thorny Bamboo/ Kawayan Tinik). Both *Bambusa blumeana* and *Bambusa spinosa* are commonly used in vernacular bamboo houses.

Bayog is a clumping bamboo with erect and sturdy culms that are more or less 20m tall, 8-12cm in diameter, and have

walls up to 4cm thick. The nodes are solitary; the nodal line and nodal ridge are present with aerial roots, especially at the lower nodes. Internodes are green and smooth; the lower ones are up to 30cm long, moderately hollow, and sometimes almost solid at the base. Culm sheaths are 20cm long, 25cm wide, narrowed upward to truncate; the outer surface is strongly ribbed, shortly pubescent with brown to black hairs, while the inner surface is weakly ribbed, shiny, and glabrous. This bamboo is able to tolerate strong annual typhoons. It is able to bend with the wind like a tensioned fishing rod because of its physiology.

Figure 2

Actual Image Of Kawayang Tinik, a Bamboo Species Abundant in the Municipality of Naguilian.



Kawayang Tinik, or *Bambusa blumeana*, is a type of bamboo belonging to the Poaceae family. It typically grows to a height of 15 to 25 meters, with culms (stems) having a diameter of 8 to 15 cm. The internode length ranges from 25 to 35 cm, and the wall thickness is between 10 to 20 mm, becoming thicker toward the base. The plant exhibits a dense clumping growth habit. While it is not inherently invasive, it can spread in certain areas. The culms are characterized by thorny spikes and slightly arching green stems. These culms can vary significantly in diameter and internode length. Clustered branches emerge from the higher nodes, each adorned with tough, sharp thorns. Kawayang Tinik is commonly used in land rehabilitation projects, as well as for creating living fences, windbreaks, or erosion prevention barriers along streams.

CONCLUSIONS

This research highlights the urgent need for community-based learning hubs to mitigate educational disruptions in mountainous regions vulnerable to natural hazards. In these high-risk barangays, students face significant barriers to accessing school, resulting in missed lessons, diminished academic performance, and heightened psychological distress. These challenges create a cycle of educational setbacks, perpetuating inequality and limiting students' potential.

By integrating GIS mapping, the study identified optimal locations for establishing learning hubs that balance accessibility and disaster resilience. This data-driven approach pinpointed safe and accessible areas, ensuring continuity in education during times of crisis. Additionally, the research emphasizes the importance of utilizing locally available materials, such as *bayog* and *kawayang tinik* bamboo, to create sustainable, culturally relevant, and economically viable educational spaces.

Establishing transitional learning hubs offers a dual benefit: addressing the immediate educational challenges posed by natural hazards while contributing to long-term community resilience. These hubs provide a safe and accessible learning environment and serve as models for sustainable development, promoting local capacity building and disaster preparedness. By investing in these hubs, the research advocates for a holistic approach to education that enhances both academic outcomes and community well-being, ensuring that the region's most vulnerable populations can continue to thrive despite the challenges posed by natural hazards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively implement the proposed transitional learning hubs and ensure their long-term sustainability, the following recommendations are made:

1. Collaboration and Funding: Establish a collaborative framework between government agencies, educational institutions, and local communities to secure funding,

coordinate construction efforts, and ensure ongoing maintenance of the learning hubs. This includes equipping the hubs with necessary learning materials and technology.

2. **Community Engagement:** Prioritize community involvement in the design, construction, and maintenance of the hubs. Engage local artisans, educators, and parents to foster a sense of ownership and ensure the cultural relevance and sustainability of the facilities.

3. **Policy Support:** Advocate for policy support from the Department of Education and local government units to promote the use of alternative learning spaces during disasters and integrate them into the educational system.

Further Research: Conduct further research to assess the long-term educational and social impacts of transitional learning hubs and refine strategies for their implementation in other hazard-prone areas. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of the hubs in mitigating learning disruptions, improving academic performance, and promoting community resilience.

By addressing these recommendations, this study aims to contribute to a more resilient and inclusive educational system in Naguilian, La Union, ensuring uninterrupted learning opportunities for students in far-flung and disaster-prone areas.

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Sustaining Forests and the People: Learning from Indigenous Forest Management as Social Forestry in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The growth of social forestry as a participatory forest management approach with the goals of conservation, social equity, and economic viability is evident in developing countries where indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) rely on forests for livelihood. This comparative exploratory case study analyzed the social forestry elements of two indigenous forest management (IFM) and two non-IFM cases in the Philippines guided by the Social Forestry Framework of Rebugio (1995). Thematic analysis of key informant interviews and focus group discussions was conducted, supplemented by a review of relevant scientific literature and documents. IFM and non-IFM cases demonstrated elements of social forestry. They were similar in terms of utilizing agroforestry and diversifying livelihoods. The IFM cases differed in the formal organization and integration of the Kalahan case into mainstream institutions compared to the Ifugao *muyong*, resulting in positive and negative implications. The more complex institutional

arrangements in the non-IFM cases add to challenges in forest management but also help ensure accountability. IFM and non-IFM systems can learn from each other through formal and informal learning exchanges that can facilitate a culture of support across different forest management strategies. Results indicate that IFM can enrich innovation in social forestry practice through indigenous values such as a deep personal connection with nature and collectivist worldviews embedded in indigenous knowledge systems and practices, especially amid increasing recognition of the role of IPLCs in biodiversity conservation. Further in-depth studies are recommended to analyze the effectiveness of IFM and non-IFM practices in meeting social forestry goals.

Keywords: Culture, forest, indigenous peoples, participatory forest management, social forestry

INTRODUCTION

Social forestry diversified the lenses of forest science, evolving from its initial focus to address the biological limitations of forests, specifically trees, to provisions for socio-economic issues, to strengthening local institutions, including customary laws, and now, to endeavoring the nations' states for robust forest policy creation and implementation (Asmin et al., 2019). Social forestry encompasses all forms of forestry interventions engaging local communities in the harmonization of the dynamic interrelationship among the community, the state, and the biophysical environment (Dove, 1995). As such, social forestry may be in the form of agroforestry, farm forestry, or community forestry.

The discipline gained prominent global attention from 1977 to 1986 when approximately 60% of the forestry lending from landbank due for projects and programs amounting to 1.3 million US dollars were devoted to social forestry to what was then defined as "forestry for local community development" (Gregersen et al., 1989; Song et al., 2021). Based on the statistics, Korten (1994) reported that social forestry lending has a large-scale significant increase from only 5% in

the previous decade. Anthropologists believe that the lack of tenurial security has led to practices detrimental to forest health, which is the reason why community participation is now being sought as seen as a driver of sustainable forest management; this is particularly done by providing more support, both financial and technical, to social forestry programs worldwide and ensure tenurial security through the creation of different policies (Schnurr and Holtz, 1998; Song et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, the social forestry objectives revolve around the concepts of preventing forest deterioration, ensuring not equal but equitable access to various ecosystem services, and sustainable management of finite forest resources (Asmin et al., 2019; Pulhin et al., 2007; Rebugio et al., 2010). To realize these objectives, social forestry has become part of the country's path toward sustainable forest resources management encapsulating three major systems, namely state-initiated social forestry programs, local government-led social forestry programs, and traditional or indigenous forest management initiatives (Asmin et al., 2019; Hlaing et al., 2013; Pulhin et al., 2007;; Rebugio et al., 2010; Suharjito, 2009). To further illustrate, state-initiated social forestry programs are being implemented through contract-based social forestry programs. In contrast, the local government-led and the indigenous and/or traditional forest management initiatives are implemented through co-management and self or community initiatives, respectively (Asmin et al., 2019; Hlaing et al., 2013;; Rebugio et al., 2010).

This paper explored four forest management initiatives representing indigenous and non-indigenous social forestry programs in the Philippines. The study objectives are: 1) Describe selected cases of indigenous forest management and social forestry interventions in the Philippines; and 2) Compare the selected cases based on Rebugio's social forestry framework. Generally, it aimed to analyze and compare selected cases to improve social forestry applications in the Philippines. The analysis was based largely on secondary data captured at different periods but still representative of the case contexts.

METHODOLOGY

The comparative exploratory case study research design was used. The social forestry cases were purposively selected to represent diversity in social forestry initiatives based on previous research and extension activities of the Department of Social Forestry and Forest Governance-College of Forestry and Natural Resources, University of the Philippines Los Baños (DSSFG-CFNR, UPLB). The cases are as follows:

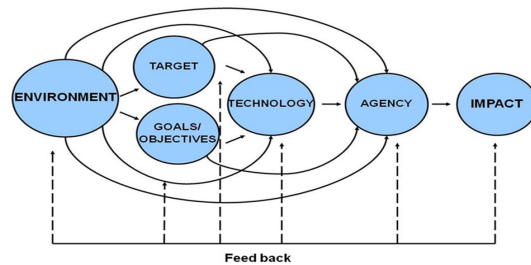
- two indigenous forest management sites (Kalahan Educational Foundation and *muyong* system in Ifugao), and
- two non-indigenous forest management sites (Barobbob Watershed Occupants Association and Federation of Vista Hills, Kalongkong, and Kakilingan Upland Farmers Association, Inc.).

Primary and secondary data were gathered and analyzed. Primary data were obtained through key informant interviews (KII) and observation. In contrast, secondary data were based on related literature available online via open access or institutional subscription, with emphasis on scientific journal articles and available project reports. Thematic analysis of data was done using the Framework for Social Forestry as a Development Program (Rebugio, 1985).

The Framework for Social Forestry as a Development program by Rebugio (1985) contains basic elements that are most likely to be applicable to social forestry initiatives, whether traditional/indigenous or interventionist. The framework focused on the six interconnected, interdependent, and interacting elements of the framework, namely environment, targets, goals and objectives, technology, agency, and impacts (Figure 1). Impacts were analyzed based on the LIFE (livelihood, income, forest condition, and equity) indicators following Hashiguchi et al. (2016).

Figure 1

Framework of Social Forestry as a Development Program (Rebugio, 1985)



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Indigenous Forest Management: *Muyong* system of Ifugao and the Kalahan Educational Foundation (KEF)

Context

The biophysical and socio-economic contexts of the KEF and Ifugao are very similar, if not practically the same. Both share similar biophysical landscapes, considering that their areas are forested mountains. Their indigeneity and traditional roots are also close. Both had a history of being oppressed and discriminated against, and their ancestral lands were grabbed either by the government or by some greedy individuals and business multinational corporations. Many of their forest areas need to be rehabilitated after so many years of degradation and misuse/abuse. However, there are some divergences when it comes to their contexts. KEF was able to use its culture and tried to mainstream and institutionalize it by putting up an academy as one of KEF's projects. They use their age-old traditions to do agroforestry and other planting and harvesting methods. Their innovative use of wild fruits to establish the fruit processing industry is distinct. Meanwhile, the Ifugao focused on the *muyong* system of managing the forests embedded within the Ifugao rice terraces (IRT) integrated agricultural system.

Targets

The direct targets in both IFMs are mainly the indigenous peoples in the communities - the *Ikalahan* and the *Ifugao*.

These are located within ancestral domains legally recognized by the government through the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). The resource system, which essentially includes forests and other natural resources, is also a direct target. The direct targets are an important basis for the objectives and goals of social forestry initiatives. Secondary targets are other stakeholders within the community, including non-IPs.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of KEF are forest protection and rehabilitation, while in Ifugao, it is sustainable and self-sufficiency. Both have a livelihood component that is forest-dependent and includes subsistence. Being forest-dependent, biodiversity protection and enhancement are part of the IFM systems studied.

Technology

In terms of forest-related technologies, Ifugao and KEF are not that different as both communities incorporate traditional knowledge. Specifically, there is the Forest Improvement Technology or FIT of the *Ikalahan* and the *muyong* of the Ifugao. The FIT is a technology developed by the *Ikalahan* elders; as such, this technology sprung from *Ikalahan*'s traditional practices and basically counts as timber stand improvement in silviculture. This practice can be a production and a conservation technology as the main purpose is to improve forest health by clearing damaged trees for lumber (Rice, D. 2001). It involves forest stand thinning and the harvesting of felled trees for potential timber and lumber for the community's use. The *muyong*, on the other hand, is a traditional forestry system of the Ifugaos where silviculture and agroforestry are incorporated. It incorporates Assisted Natural Regeneration, which includes enrichment planting and several stand management techniques. It is also a tree-based agroforestry involving multiple cropping in their swidden areas. Similar to the FIT of the KEF, the *muyong* system may count as both production and conservation technology as it involves stand improvement techniques, whilst harvest is based on private ownership of these *muyong* lands. In this method, selective harvesting is observed for the efficient and regulated

whole-tree harvesting for timber. Both technologies emanate from indigenous knowledge and traditions. They are the primary forestry systems in the said communities that have proven successful and sustainable over time.

Table 1

Comparison of Social Forestry Technologies in Ifugao and KEF

KEF	Ifugao
Forest Improvement Technology (FIT)	<i>Muyong</i>
Timber Stand Improvement	Assisted Natural Regeneration
Traditional Silvicultural Method	Tree-based Agroforestry
Forest stand thinning and harvesting of felled trees for timber and lumber.	Selective harvesting; Efoicient & regulated whole-tree harvesting for timber
Ecological Niche	IRT or <i>ala/alahan</i>

Agency

In terms of agency, the KEF and Ifugao are also very similar, specifically in human resources, and follow traditions. The only difference is that there is an organization that is responsible for the management of the Kalahan Reserve in Imugan, Nueva Vizcaya, is the Kalahan Educational Foundation, while in Ifugao, management is based on family lineage ownership or private ownership of lands. Since authority and responsibilities are decentralized in the management of the Kalahan Reserve, the Kalahan Educational Foundation becomes the principal implementing agency of the social forestry initiatives within the said environment, which is spearheaded mostly by their selected tribal elders along Ikalahan communities. The power devolved to the Ikalahans in resource management enables them to

formulate and decide on their policies in the management efforts. In Ifugao, on the other hand, the regulation and management of their *muyong* forest lands are the responsibility of their owners or family members. Moreover, both communities follow customary laws, specifically for KEF, and there is that of the *tong-tongan* system, which they use to resolve forest violations. At the same time, this is also true for Ifugao; most of the customary laws are parallel and connected with mainstream institutions and programs.

Table 2

Comparison of Social Forestry Agency in Ifugao and KEF

KEF	Ifugao
<p>Managed by the KEF</p> <p>Resource management is handled by KEF but is aided by Forest Guards and concerned BLGUs in policy monitoring and implementation.</p> <p>Follows customary laws (<i>Tong-tongan system</i>) and community-developed policies.</p> <p>Human Resources refers to Ikalahans.</p>	<p>Owned and managed by family (private)</p> <p>Resource management partly shared by community members allows them to gather resources in the <i>muyong</i></p> <p>Governed mainly by customary laws within mainstream institutions and programs</p> <p>Included in the IRT-GIAHS</p>

Impacts

The similarities in elements of social forestry for both communities generated similar impacts. Initially, there were improvements in local livelihoods; for KEF, there is that of the ecological niches, forest management, and the fruit processing niche that had employed many of its members, while in Ifugao, there is that of the ensured water improvement and supply that greatly aided the irrigation of their agricultural systems, and the increase of timber supply for potential wood carving initiatives. The diversification of livelihoods and improvements in ecological services had basically invited several alternatives for income for

both communities as well. In line with this, there are also evident improvements in terms of forest health and biodiversity in terms of wild flora and fauna, as well as overall forest health. Lastly, regarding equity, both communities have now been sustaining equal distributions and recognition of rights as well as collective labor regardless of social status.

Further, with the application and empowerment of culture and traditions injected into the forestry system today, there was enrichment in IKSP along with the promotion of culture, which is evident for both communities. In addition, the increase in income helped the Ikalahans to suffice for food security and health, along with the diversification of crops and medicinal sources for Ifugao. Lastly, aside from the improvements in forest conditions and biodiversity, there were also developments in overall environmental quality, specifically on watershed health and carbon security for KEF. At the same time, Ifugao is seeing water, air, and soil quality improvement.

Table 3

Comparison of Impacts of the Social Forestry System in Ifugao and KEF

Theme	KEF	Ifugao
<i>Livelihoods</i>	Regulated local use of and access to forests; Developed opportunities for livelihood (food processing) and employed members.	Ensured water quantity & quality for agriculture; Increased timber supply for wood carving.
<i>Income</i>	Increased income from livelihood diversification (ecological niches)	Increased income from wood carving & agri
<i>Forest Condition</i>	Recognized with less deforestation; Improved forest health and biodiversity; Lessened the occurrences of wildfires.	Continued forest regeneration & increased forest biodiversity
<i>Equity</i>	Even distribution and recognition of responsibilities and rights regardless of gender, education, age & economic status	Enriched reciprocity & collective labor
<i>Other Impacts</i>	Culture: Enriched IKSP & Culture Empowerment Food security & health: increased income and livelihood opportunities for families Environmental quality: Improved watershed, carbon protection, and improved biodiversity conservation	Culture: Enriched IKSP & environmental values Food security & health: more diverse protein & medicinal plant sources Environmental quality: Improved water, air, and soil quality; Increased overall biodiversity

Synthesis

The social forestry framework, as depicted by Rebugio, is a

useful framework for describing and analyzing IFMs. The two communities are relatively similar in terms of the social forestry elements based on Rebugio's framework. However, there was a growing realization that the framework can be further enhanced when looking at indigenous or traditional social forestry since cultural elements, which are significant in IP communities, are not distinctly emphasized in the framework. The social and cultural context in Rebugio's framework were collectively included in the environmental element. To give an example, the two traditional technologies mentioned, such as the FIT for KEF and the *muyong* for the Ifugaos, portray huge similarities with today's scientific methods, specifically in Silviculture and Agroforestry. Yet there is a rising question on what has driven the success of these traditional methods that lacked or even failed in modern and today's applications. In addition, Rebugio's social forestry framework appears to apply more appropriately to social forestry as an intervention system rather than as an embedded part of a community, which is the case for IFMs as social forestry systems. As illustrated in the IFM cases, the indigenous social forestry systems emanate from culture, including values and Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), that are enhanced through time and, hence, sustainable. The addition of culture as an element would help better understand and contextualize varying issues, problems, and specific cases unique but not limited to Indigenous communities further to understand social forestry, its processes, and development.

Non-indigenous Forest Management: Barobbob Watershed and CBFM-ITTO Context

To compare the environmental context of the Barobbob watershed and CBFM-ITTO, it can be observed that in terms of their biophysical environment, both sites fall under climatic type 3 because they are both in Nueva Vizcaya. However, their areas are incomparable because, obviously, the management unit of CBFM-ITTO is larger than the management unit of the Barobbob watershed has an area of 3,000 and 867, respectively. In terms of their land cover, Barobbob is mostly residual forest, grassland, and agricultural areas with some agroforestry areas, too. In contrast, plantations, dipterocarp forests, and

agroforestry areas dominate CBFM-ITTO. Similarly, since both are forest areas, the livelihoods of the communities in Barobbob and CBFM-ITTO were mostly forest-based.

Table 4

Comparison of Environmental Context in Barobbob Watershed and CBFM-ITTO

	Barobbob Watershed	CBFM-ITTO
Biophysical	BW has a total area of 867 ha, which is recognized as a major watershed in Nueva Vizcaya. It falls under Climate Type 3, with an average annual rainfall of 2400mm. It is largely dominated by residual forest cover, grassland, and agricultural areas.	The CBFM-ITTO has a total area of 3000 hectares, of which 1500 ha are dipterocarp forests, 1300 ha are agroforestry, and 200 ha are plantation and regenerating forests. Further, the area is a part and parcel of the Magat River basin. In terms of climate, it falls under climate Type 3.
Socio-Economic	Less than 200 families are living inside the Barobbob Watershed that are mostly engaged in forest-based livelihoods.	There are about 180 households that are members of the PO, and the majority practice forest-based livelihood.

Targets

In terms of the target system, both areas aim to protect their forest areas and provide livelihood opportunities for the community. However, they differ slightly in terms of forest management objectives, wherein Barobbob focuses on the restoration and rehabilitation of their forest areas. At the same

time, CBFM-ITTO wants to pursue forest plantation establishment. Moreover, in terms of their social targets, similarly, the social forestry interventions in Barobbob and CBFM-ITTO aim to benefit the people's organizations of officers and members primarily. The government unit, the DENR, and other institutions, such as the academe, are the indirect beneficiaries.

Table 5

Comparison of Target Systems in Barobbob Watershed and CBFM-ITTO

	Barobbob Watershed	CBFM-ITTO
Goal	To make Barobbob Watershed a model of life-sustaining resources that are managed on a sustainable basis	Improve the productivity of degraded and regenerating forest lands through community-based forest management by the application of research-validated methods.
Objectives	To restore the vegetative cover in the critically located areas of the watershed as soon as possible. To recognize the "right to stay" in the area as partners for development To strengthen the "right to stay" through community organization and awarding of tenurial instruments to each member by way of a Land Management Agreement	Establish forest plantations and manage regenerating and mature natural forests using research-validated methods; Manage forest resources through the community-based forest management (CBFM) strategy and Develop a community-level system of monitoring the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management.

Goals and Objectives

Both sites are geared towards participatory sustainable management of their assigned areas. They aim to improve forest cover and land productivity to sustain the ecosystem goods and

services derived from it. The objectives, similar to their goals, are to restore vegetative cover by planting and managing the forest. However, their objectives differ in the emphasis on succeeding points. For the Barobbob, the emphasis is on making sure that the people get their "right to stay" in the area by partnering for development and organizing themselves into a community organization so that tenurial instruments are awarded to them. Meanwhile, in the case of CBFM-ITTO, the focus is on participatory management that would employ CBFM strategies and develop a community-level system of monitoring the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management.

Table 6

Comparison between the Objectives of the Social Forestry Program in Barobbob Watershed and CBFM- ITTO

	Barobbob Watershed	CBFM-ITTO
Goal	To make Barobbob Watershed a model of life-sustaining resources that are managed on a sustainable basis	Improve the productivity of degraded and regenerating forest lands through community-based forest management by the application of research-validated methods.
Objectives	To restore the vegetative cover in the critically located areas of the watershed as soon as possible. To recognize the "right to stay" in the area as partners for development To strengthen the "right to stay" through community organization and awarding of tenurial instruments to each member by way of a Land Management Agreement	Establish forest plantations and manage regenerating and mature natural forests using research-validated methods; Manage forest resources through the community-based forest management (CBFM) strategy and Develop a community-level system of monitoring the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management.

Technology

Both sites practice agroforestry. CBFM ITTO employs SALT, while BWOA employs gardening or cash crops together with forest trees. In the literature, BWOA also has oishpond on terraced areas, erosion control through planting, vegetative boundary delineation, and Abaca planting, whose planting materials are provided by DENR. Meanwhile, CBFM-ITTO is utilizing non-timber forest products, such as winemaking, for its enterprise. However, in the case of BWOA, they have the right to harvest, but mainly not for commercial purposes (Cruz et al., 2008).

Table 7

Comparison of the Technologies Employed in Barobbob Watershed and CBFM-ITTO

Barobbob Watershed	CBFM-ITTO
Agroforestry farming	Agroforestry farming
Home Gardening	Sloping Agricultural Land Technology
Fishpond on Terraced Rice Area	Non-Timber Forest Products
Erosion control and vegetative boundary delineation	Soil and Water Conservation
Abaca Planting	

Agency

Agency systems of the Barobbob watershed and the CBFM-ITTO are similar in terms of internal and external agencies. First, they are both managed by a People's Organization. The Barobbob Watershed Occupants' Association co-manages part of the Barobbob watershed. In contrast, the Federation of Vista Hills, Kalongkong, and Kakilingan Upland Farmers Association, Inc. manages the CBFM-ITTO. In terms of internal agencies, the CBFM-ITTO has a more centralized and systematic agency as it employs policies on a community-level. Thus, PO members have relatively collective interests due to the presence of a unified policy for all members. The BWOA, on the other hand, is composed of members with individual Memorandum of Agreement. Therefore, interests are expected to be scattered and differing. In terms of external support (Table 7), both POs are

receiving outside aid and assistance, both technical and financial aspects, from government agencies, academe, interest groups, and other organizations.

Table 7

Comparison of Agency Systems in Barobbob Watershed and CBFM-ITTO

	Barobbob Watershed	CBFM-ITTO
People's Organization	BWOA members managed the land parcels	The Federation of Vista Hills, Kalingong, and Kalingan Upland Farmers Inc. is managing the CBFM area.
External Support	NVSU, Bagabag Upland Free Farmers Association Inc., Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), and Organization of European Community Fund (OECF)	DENR (MENRO and PENRO), Local Government Unit of Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, the Academe, and initially, the ITTO.

Impacts

LIFE indicators, namely livelihood, income, forest condition, and equity, were used to determine the impacts of social forestry intervention on the two non-indigenous forest management sites. As a result, the impacts of social forestry programs in these two sites are not far from each other, owing to relatively similar systems. First, livelihood in both areas has increased and diversified. There is also the presence of livelihood systems in both sites that are not related to forests, such as construction work in the lowlands, businesses or enterprises, and other professional work. Further, the overall income has improved in both sites. However, the increase in income does not uplift their socio-economic conditions because most, if not all, households remain poor. Due to the community-based interventions employed in the sites, the forest condition likewise improved with a focus on biodiversity enhancement and conservation of natural resources, which are all evident in the

increase of wildlife and improvement of forest cover. Lastly, BWOA members gained equitable access to forest resources, enabling them to have more benefits in managing the forestland. On the other hand, the FVHKKUFAI members were able to minimize competition for natural resources due to community organizing, which maximized the local participation of the community members.

Table 8

Comparison of Impacts of Social Forestry in Barobbob Watershed and CBFM-ITTO

THEME	Barobbob Watershed	CBFM-ITTO
Livelihood	Increase in diversity of forest-based livelihood and use of land	Presence of forest-dependent but not highly detrimental livelihood opportunities
Income	Increase farmers' income but limited to a few members of the community	Improved income levels, but most still belong to low-income group
Forest Condition	Biodiversity preservation and conservation	Signioicant increase in closed-canopy and plantation forests and a decrease in cultivated and grassland areas
Equity	Increased benefits gained for managing the land	Minimized forest resource competition and maximized local participation

Synthesis

Key findings of the study reveal that the elements of Rebugio's framework were directly observed in the two non-indigenous forest management sites. With regards to the framework, both sites have their similarities. The difference is seen in the tenurial instrument that devolves to managing forest land. For CBFM- -ITTO, it is the CBFMA that they hold that ultimately uses the CBFM as a social forestry intervention. Meanwhile, the BWOA holds MOAs that grant them the "right to stay," given that they will adhere to the goals and objectives stipulated in the MOA.

It was also observed that there is a difference in the way the tenurial rights were granted. For the BWOA, although they have constituted themselves in a people's organization, the MOA was distributed among the individual members. Thus, BWOA exhibits multiple holders of MOA. It is also the reason why they were able to sell some of the rights to the land of the Barobbob watershed. In contrast, CBFM-ITTO holds only one CBFMA for

the whole federation, even though the federation itself has three different associations. They are united in goals and objectives and adhere to the rules and regulations stipulated in the agreement.

Both sites experience threats in terms of tenurial instruments. Hence, no perpetual security of tenure. For the BWOA, the renewal is threatened by the uncontrolled and rampant buying and selling of rights. In contrast, for CBFM-ITTO, the smooth renewal of their tenurial instrument is being hindered by the conflicting claims between different IPs, with some already putting their *muhon* (marker) on the ground in the areas being managed by the CBFM-ITTO.

Lastly, during the discussions, it was revealed that the PO officers of both sites were not given incentives for the work rendered. As such, accepting to be elected as officials of the organizations is almost voluntary if not for the perks of having to attend training intended for farming and livelihood as representatives of their organizations. Thus, it could also be inferred that since the services are voluntary, holding them accountable for any dispute is almost questionable.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both indigenous and non-indigenous forest management systems demonstrated elements of social forestry based on Rebugio's framework. However, some of the elements are not explicitly and formally defined in the indigenous cases. Although the elements were less explicitly identified in the case of Ifugao and were gleaned from other existing information, the *muyong* could still be defined as a functioning social forestry system with Rebugio's interacting components (environment, goals and objectives, targets, technologies, impacts). The KEF, as an IFM, had a more interventionist character than the *muyong*. Meanwhile, as interventions, the interactions and the feedback in the non-IFM cases were observable in accordance with Rebugio's framework.

The key role of culture, especially in indigenous forest

management systems, needs to be more clearly considered in the framework (e.g., in indigenous psycho-spiritual ways of knowing and doing research, etc.). While it is understood that culture is included in the Environmental context in Rebugio's framework, it is not distinctly indicated and, hence, could not fully capture its importance in IFMs such as in the case of the Ifugao and the Ikalahan forest management systems studied.

Similarities across cases were observed in terms of utilization of agroforestry and diversification of livelihoods in the systems. Meanwhile, the IFM and non-IFM cases differed in terms of the financial incentives noted as a limitation in the non-IFM cases. In contrast, in the IFM cases, emphasis was given more on the need to maintain cultural values for the environment (passing on to the next generations) and reciprocity.

In comparing the IFMs, the Ikalahan system has been found to be more formally organized and integrated into mainstream institutions than the Ifugao *muyong*. This has both positive and negative implications: positive, in that value-adding technologies for processing non-timber forest products (e.g., jams) were considered and implemented; and negative, in that the same technologies also faced challenges in relation to supply and demand (e.g., exporting the jams was considered in the past but production has declined).

As more formally designed and implemented systems, the non-IFMs had similar characteristics in most of the elements (e.g., goals, objectives, and targets). This can be related to the systems' design based on existing policies, programs, and institutional arrangements.

There are two sides to the coin in terms of the more complex institutional arrangements in non-IFM cases. It adds to the challenges in the management system. Still, the more formalized structure may also help ensure accountability compared to informal IFM institutions, on the other if cultural values for environmental stewardship are eroded in IP communities. Another challenge in non-IFM institutions is that the regularly changing local government officials or assigned agency officers can easily influence support for or against a

particular program.

Based on the findings of the study, a framework that more clearly encapsulates the realities of social forestry in terms of the key role of culture in developing indigenous forest management systems can be developed. IFMs are less interventionist, but they are also considered social forestry systems. More explicit inclusion of culture as an important factor can better capture the realities on the ground.

Considering the similarities and differences across IFM and non-IFM cases, it is recommended that opportunities for co-learning between and among indigenous and non-indigenous social forestry systems be maximized towards enriching social forestry as a field and as a practice. Co-learning based on actual experiences can enrich forest management through social forestry, facilitate the bridging of indigenous and Western knowledge, and also help cultivate a supportive environment between IFM and non-IFM initiatives. This is important considering the existence of overlapping initiatives and conflicts over land ownership/ management, especially in ancestral domains where most forests are situated. Co-learning contributes to the learning process and can facilitate adaptation of forest management to changing contexts.

Further studies are recommended to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of IFM and non-IFM cases as social forestry systems in the Philippines. This is especially important since social forestry and community-based forest management continue to be recognized as sustainable forest management strategies/ approaches in the country. For example, indigenous non-technological practices related to psycho-spiritual socio-cultural ecosystemic realities and their implications for forest and community wellness can be further explored in future studies. A deep personal connection with nature has been found in studies to be important in influencing environmental worldviews and human-environment relationships. Developing and capitalizing on spiritual/ cultural connections with nature and non-technological practices that also improve forest conditions and community well-being is still relevant, especially amid current wellness trends that emphasize

spiritual, emotional, and cultural aspects.

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Anchoring the Modern Approach of the World's Freshwater Laboratory in the Traditional Anishinaabe Worldview

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ABSTRACT

A contemporary natural scientist typically describes water as “colorless, odorless, tasteless, a universal solvent” that “exists in different phases” and “is built of molecules of two hydrogens and one oxygen,” whereas an Anishinaabe Elder who carries Traditional Knowledge considers water as “a spirit, a living being” that “gives life and takes life” and “is sent down from the sky to bring forth provision.” What happens when these two worldviews meet? Despite recent efforts in academia to bring Indigenous knowledge from the peripheries to the center stage, we still find Western models dominate. This paper aimed to amplify Indigenous knowledge—specifically Anishinaabe teachings from the heart of colonial Canada—and center it within modern scientific discourse in the field of freshwater research. IISD Experimental Lakes Area (IISD-ELA) is uniquely situated in the boreal forests of northwestern Ontario, Canada, on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe people. For over 55 years, the whole ecosystem approach at IISD-ELA has pushed the envelope of our understanding of many environmental challenges that impact fresh water. IISD-ELA’s engagement of local knowledge keepers on the ground, in the real world, in contrast to the theoretical, attempts to re-evaluate the ecologies of two distinct knowledge systems and break through conventional conceptualizations of worldviews. This paper concludes a dire need for a paradigm shift in

acquiring knowledge in the conscious minds of scientists. It provides practical lessons and insights gained through the example of a science community traversing the middle path.

Keywords: Anishinaabe, indigenous knowledge, science, water,

MIIGWECH MANITO

Miigwech Manito, meaning “Thank you, Creator (Great Spirit),” is the way Anishinaabe Elders and knowledge carriers initiate a speech or blessing at a ceremony, a gathering, or an event. Therefore, *Miigwech Manito*.

During an opening ceremony, an Anishinaabe Elder would first introduce himself, including his spirit name, his clan, and his *doodem* (or totem). In most cases, the Elder then invites everyone present also to introduce themselves. The reason why the spirit name, clan, and *doodem* are included in an introduction is that, as Memashkawigaabaw, a language helper from Nigigoon-siminikaaning First Nation, said, “Anishinaabe people will be asked about these three things when they pass on to the Spirit World” (Memashkawigaabaw, personal communication, December 2024).

From a worldly perspective, self-introduction is the beginning of a relationship. It conveys messages about who we are (*do I know you?*) and how we are, as in our ways of being and doing, our cultures and customs, and our manners and etiquettes (*can I trust you?*). More often, we look for instant connection if we share a similar worldview (*can I relate to you?*).

Orientally raised and occidentally educated, I am often confronted with different, sometimes opposing, perspectives. Clashes of these perspectives have exposed me to different bodies of knowledge and helped cultivate in me a curious mind. This is an attempt to put into words the lessons and insights that have been accumulated walking across the world.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of inserting Indigenous knowledge into West-

ern frameworks has become a focal point of critique and reflection in scholarly discourse. The fate of Indigenous knowledge when confronting the dominant Eurocentric paradigms often ends up being either outright denied or superficially adopted or shape-shifted into something unrecognizable as a result of assimilation (Ahenakew, 2016; Santos, 2014; Smith, 1999).

Santos' concept of "epistemicide" paints a devastating picture of the suppression and erasure of non-Western ways of knowing and being by the colonial powers (Santos, 2014). For centuries, Indigenous Peoples struggled to preserve the ways of their ancestors, and many took them underground (according to testimonies I often hear from Indigenous Peoples). With these alternative perspectives resurfacing and re-entering our dialogues, there is a clash of worldviews. The dominant ideals that focus on development, accumulation, and progress dictate that we jump to quick fixes for the sake of knowledge production and attempt to "graft" Indigenous knowledge onto the branches of the Western paradigm, and in doing so, we risk distorting the ways of the ancestors (Andreotti et al., 2011; Ahenakew, 2016).

The explorative work of these scholars points to the challenge *not* of inclusion or integration by planting Indigenous knowledge in foreign soil; rather, it invites us to critically analyze and reflect on the framework in which we ground ourselves (Ahenakew, 2016; Andreotti et al., 2011). When the "grafting" of Indigenous knowledge is made visible, it becomes clear that Indigenous knowledge is either being reduced to a set of categories that is filtered through the Western lens or is induced into the Western tendencies of universalizing knowledge (Ahenakew, 2016; Lombard, 2022). Both are a result of a lack of true reflection on our worldviews, as well as a lack of deep humility toward alternative perspectives.

Worldviews and Modes of Knowledge Acquisition

A worldview is a foundational lens through which individuals and communities interpret and understand the world around them and their places in it (Berkes, 2012). It is often shaped by language, culture, and experience, and it forms a web of intricate values, beliefs, and relationships (Whorf, 1956). Indigenous worldviews are known to be relational and spiritual, whereas Western paradigms often prioritize objectivity and utili-

ty (Smith, 1999). The contrast becomes particularly pronounced in the *management of the natural resources* as described in a Western perspective, as opposed to *reciprocal relationships with all relatives* in an Indigenous view of the world. The contrast is not only in the linguistic expression but also in the ontological positioning of oneself. Indigenous epistemology positions humans *not* as separate from nature but as integral members of vast and interconnected worlds of both the seen and the unseen (McGregor, 2014).

This conceptual and epistemological divide between Western and Indigenous worldviews has profound implications for the mechanisms or modes of acquiring knowledge (Lumbard, 2024) as a mode of knowledge acquisition, science or scientific method entails a systemic and robust process of inquiry through questioning, observing, experimenting, analyzing, and concluding to investigate natural phenomena (Hepburn & Andersen, 2021). This mode of knowledge inquiry is extremely useful in gaining a better and clearer understanding of a study object in a controlled, observable, and measurable environment. In this paper, I intentionally avoid using “Western science,” a term that is still widely adopted and implies scientific contributions attributed solely to the West (Kayumova & Dou, 2022). It is also argued that the origin of scientific methodology can be traced back and linked to non-Western traditions (Castillo, 2013). Therefore, the term “Western science” is used to limit science within the paradigms of Western-centred thinking. However, my caution in using “Western science” in no way minimizes the contributions that the West has made in scientific fields.

Knowledge and Ethics

Western paradigms are often critiqued for their lack of ethical dimensions in knowledge production and for treating research pursuits as a detached process of discovery rather than a relational stance of care and a reciprocal act of protection (Gross et al., 2023; Smith, 1999). In contrast, ethics and moral responsibilities are inherently linked to the growth of knowledge in Indigenous worldviews (Andreotti et al., 2011; Smith, 1999). Lumbard critiques the separation of ethics from knowledge and ar-

gues that *true* knowledge is inseparable from ethical acts and that ethics must be lived and practiced to gain *true* knowledge (Lumbard, 2022). This line of thinking is much like the Anishinaabe moral framework provided by the teachings of *bimaa-diziwin* (the “good life”) or the Seven Sacred Laws of wisdom, love, respect, courage, honesty, humility, and truth, which are acts of good (way of being) on a day-to-day basis that leads to good knowledge (way of knowing) (Gross et al., 2023; Ruml, 2012). In simple words, doing good—as in being good to the land and the water, the plants and the animals, and the seen and the unseen—leads to knowledge. This mode of acquiring knowledge is in stark contrast with the knowledge that is gained through separation, compartmentalization, and accumulation, in which there exists an ethical void.

The deliberation of the interlink among worldviews, modes of acquiring knowledge, and moral values can foster a paradigm shift, especially in scientists, researchers, and educators who primarily operate within a Western framework. This paper is my attempt to encourage colleagues who work with knowledge from a Western perspective to reflect on their - epistemological assumptions and to reimagine the possibilities of anchoring science, scientific methods, research, and education in Indigenous worldviews of relational, responsible, and reciprocal ways of knowing and being while being mindful of the potential risk of pruning diverse ecosystems of knowledge into conformity. To achieve this, I will present the lessons and insights gained from the unique case of the IISD Experimental Lakes Area (IISD-ELA, www.iisd.org/ela), a freshwater science facility stationed on the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe people, as it navigates the journey of engaging with local knowledge. Can IISD-ELA see its reflection in the still waters of Anishinaabe perspectives? My methodology for addressing this question is to weave together stories of key moments of reflection from this journey. In doing so, I assert that the scientific endeavors of IISD-ELA will thrive with greater vitality when nourished and steered by the profound Anishinaabe wisdom on water and other relatives.

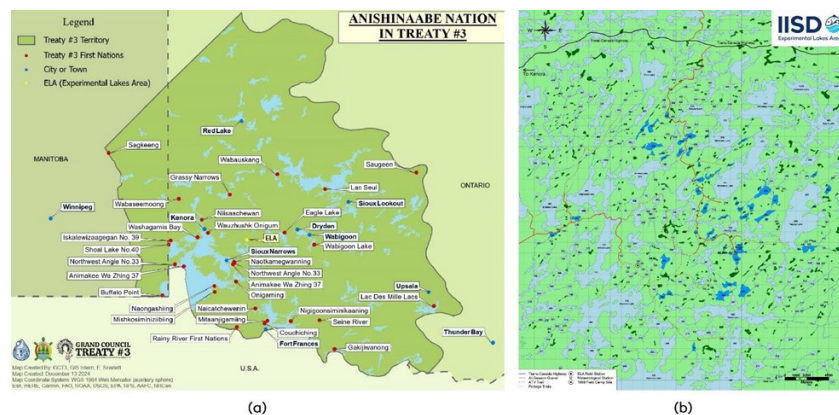
About Treaty #3 and IISD-ELA

There were 70 treaties signed in the span of more than 200 years from 1701 to 1923 between the European settlers and Indigenous Peoples who resided on the land now known as Canada (Daugherty, 1986). The political reality of the mid-19th century propelled the British to enter into agreements with the Saulteaux, one of the four groups of the Anishinaabe, in order to establish their presence from Fort Garry to Fort William (known today as Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Thunder Bay, Ontario, respectively) (Daugherty, 1986; Grand Council Treaty #3, 2025). Signed on October 3, 1873, Treaty #3 allowed the British to proceed with their plan to build a route that traversed the territory through a web of rivers and lakes, among other things (Grand Council Treaty #3, 2025). The negotiation also allowed the *unceded* land and the resources to be shared between the Anishinaabe and the British within the territory of 55,000 square miles (see Figure 1-a) (Daugherty, 1986; Grand Council Treaty #3, 2025).

There are 28 Anishinaabe communities in the traditional territory of Treaty #3 (Grand Council Treaty #3, 2025). The word *Anishinaabe* is used interchangeably with *Ojibwe* as a distinct identity. *Ojibwe* also refers to the language known as Anishinaabemowin, which is the Anishinaabe language.

Figure 1

- (a) Map of Treaty #3, which includes 28 Anishinaabe communities;
- (b) Map of IISD-ELA



Source: (a) Grand Council Treaty #3, 2025, with permission; (b) IISD-ELA.

Memashkawigaabaw, the language helper from Nigigoonsiminkaaning First Nation, shared his search for the meaning of *Anishinaabe*:

I like to joke about the word *Anishinaabe* when I introduce myself. I say, 'I'm not Anishinaabe; I am *onizhishinaabe*.' The laughter that follows helps me identify who the language speakers are because *onizhishi* means "handsome" or "nice-looking," and *aabe* refers to a male. It's a playful twist, but there's a connection to the meaning of *Anishinaabe*. While *Anishinaabe* generally refers to human beings or *Nenaboozhoo*—the original man—it also carries the idea of a process. The *Ani-* prefix signifies something in the process of becoming; *shina-* refers to being lowered; and *aabe* points to the male of a species. This all ties back to the creation story of *Nenaboozhoo*, whose spirit was lowered from the sky and born into the world. (Memashkawigaabaw, personal communication, January 2025)

Consisting of 58 small-bodied pristine lakes and their watersheds (see Figure 1-b), Experimental Lakes Area was founded in 1968 by a group of limnologists who were determined to gain a better understanding of the then-much-debated issue of algal blooms. ELA is unique for two reasons: 1) it is a scientific facility remotely situated in the boreal forest of the province of Ontario, in colonial Canada, as well as in the heart of Treaty #3 Traditional Lands of the Anishinaabe people (see Figure 1-a), and 2) the whole ecosystem approach that ELA adopted to tackle freshwater issues is both innovative and transformative. For over 55 years, scientists and researchers at ELA have been implementing this approach to conduct experiments to uncover the impact humans have on inland lakes, leading to many groundbreaking discoveries in our understanding of environmental challenges that freshwater faces, such as acid rain, mercury contamination, oil spills, and so on.

In 2014, the ELA facility experienced a historic transition from being a federally run institution to a not-for-profit subsidiary of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), an international think tank based in Canada as a subsidiary of IISD. The research station was rebranded as IISD-ELA. Since then, IISD-ELA has welcomed new opportunities and im-

aginations to expand its mandate in scientific endeavors, education, and communications.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this paper centers on reflection, a means of breaking through the surface and peering into what lies beneath. Reflection is also an opportunity to pause and carefully examine experiences, perspectives, and questions to make connections, deepen understanding, and gain clarity. Looking back on nearly a decade of immersion in the teachings of local Elders and knowledge keepers on the one hand and communicating IISD-ELA's science and research to the communities on the other, the moments of reflection have helped conceptualize and make sense of the intersections of multiple ways of knowing and being. IISD-ELA's approach to fostering relationships with Indigenous communities in Treaty #3 allows for dedicated and open-ended engagement, unburdened by rigid agendas. It involves attending community gatherings, participating in ceremonies, and collaborating on the ground to co-create projects that foster learning and sharing.

People and Place

Nestled deep within the boreal forests and surrounded by hundreds of lakes, the IISD-ELA facility serves as a hub for scientists, researchers, and students from various fields of hydrology, meteorology, biology, toxicology, and so on (see Figure 2). During the open-water season, this vibrant community comes together to implement the whole-ecosystem approach to experimental research through dosing, sampling, testing, and analyzing, all aimed at improving our understanding of the complex challenges facing freshwater ecosystems.

While the deliberate change or addition of substances to the experimental lakes—mainly within mesocosms as well as across entire lakes—is a unique practice that attracts the curiosity of scientists and researchers, it also exposes water to continuous handling, examination, and alteration. This reality under-

mines a profound responsibility to honor water from an Anishinaabe perspective. Therefore, guided by the wisdom of local Elders, ceremonies were introduced to ensure that the work is conducted with respect, humility, and a steadfast commitment to preserving the integrity of water. IISD-ELA now hosts an annual Spring Nibi Ceremony (*nibi* means “water” in Ojibwe) and a Fall Feast, which invite people from all walks of life to join in the sacred practices led by Elders. In these ceremonies, the Elders lift and bless the water, surrounded by those who, through their daily work with these lakes, often find themselves bonding with the waters they tend to.

Figure 2

Aerial Photo of the IISD-ELA facility



Source: IISD-ELA.

Through the organic process of immersing in local experiences—active listening, observing, and learning—two key moments of reflection stand out. My intention in sharing these moments is to highlight the key instances that prompted reflection on the concepts of worldviews, ways of acquiring knowledge, and moral responsibilities discussed in the Introduction. My interpretation of some of the teachings may contain inaccuracies, given the inherent barriers in different languages and worldviews, and I welcome any corrections.

Reflection 1: “Water is living.”

In Anishinaabe cultures, *nibi* is held in high regard. People get together to honor *nibi* through gatherings, water walks, and ceremonies that lift and advocate for water. These events, often organized and led by women Elders, are centered entirely around *nibi*. Each gathering begins with an Elder speaking in Anishinaabemowin, setting the tone in a good way. For those of us unfamiliar with the language, an English translation follows. The Elder gives thanks to the Creator for sending the water and expresses gratitude for its life-sustaining power. Water is described *repeatedly* as a living spirit, a sacred entity that both gives and takes life. The Elder also calls attention to all our relatives—human, plant, and animal—and the sacred web of relationships that bind us to water. With reverence and urgency, the Elder reminds us of our responsibility to water, affirming that the Creator entrusted the Anishinaabe people as the custodians and guardians of *nibi* and all other beings.

Some ceremonies include the sacred meeting of *nibi*, where waters gathered from different parts of the region and nation, and even from around the world, are brought together and mixed as a symbol of the unity of all waters as one body. It reflects the connection of all waters and that when one body of water suffers, the pain is felt across the whole. At times, *nibi* songs, the ancient melodies passed through generations or gifted in the dreams of knowledge carriers, are sung to the steady rhythm of drums or the shake of rattles. These songs are expressions and acts of connection, a way to speak to *nibi* and invoke its healing.

When fluent Ojibwe speakers shift to English to convey water teachings, there's sometimes a noticeable hesitation, as if words falter at the tip of the tongue. These moments reveal how much is lost in translation, how the essence of these teachings is deeply rooted in Anishinaabemowin, and how English falls short of capturing their true depth and meaning. The gap between the two languages became especially apparent during a translation exercise when we attempted to translate IISD-ELA's research into Anishinaabemowin. This will be explored further in Reflection 2.

The deep connections that exist among water, humans and all living beings were encapsulated in the creation of the Treaty #3 Nibi Declaration, a framework for water advocacy grounded in Anishinaabe laws and values. Shaped by the voices of community members, the declaration was presented in a ceremony and honored with a feast before being formally printed and bound, affirming its sacred and communal significance. The Nibi Declaration gives voice to the voiceless—water. As the custodians of *nibi*, a responsibility bestowed by the Creator, the Anishinaabe people speak on its behalf, proclaiming that water holds inherent rights and must be respected, protected, and cherished as a living entity.

The connection among all relatives that the Anishinaabe people speak of transcends time. In a collaborative project with Sagkeeng First Nation, we explored the interconnectedness between the community and the land. As industrial development encroaches, ecological loss has been inseparably tied to cultural erosion. The decline of nature's elements often reflects the fading of traditions, customs, and cultural practices. A few community members recalled the removal of old trees. They remarked on the loss of connection to their ancestors: "Some trees were ancient in age, thousands of years old, [and were] friends to our ancestors" (Anonymous community member, personal communication, December 2022).

Reflection 2: "The air that the trees breathe."

In an effort to minimize the language barrier in communicating IISD-ELA's research and out of curiosity about expressing scientific findings in Anishinaabemowin, we embarked on translating key research conclusions into Ojibwe. One such study focuses on climate change through a diversion project designed to mimic water level fluctuations in lakes. We quickly realized that many scientific terms, like carbon dioxide (CO₂), did not have direct equivalents in Ojibwe. To explain this, we delved into the nature of what CO₂ is, describing it as a compound of one carbon atom, the foundation of all life, and two oxygen atoms.

One Elder, after patiently listening to our explanation, asked, "What does CO₂ do?" After a moment of reflection, we

replied, “CO₂ is the gas we exhale, and it sustains plants.” This simple exchange ignited a shared “aha!” moment. The Ojibwe speakers, with new clarity, visualized the movement of CO₂ and crafted an Ojibwe interpretation: *mitigoo-inanaamowin*. Its English translation in reverse means “the air that the trees breathe.” For the rest of us, it was a moment of shifting from defining what something *is* to seeing what something *does*.

mitigoo-inanaamowin ni carbon dioxide

mitig = tree

in = thus; in a certain direction; in a certain manner

anaamo = breathe; use the voice

win = noun forming final

The same process unfolded when translating research on mercury contamination in fish. The term for mercury emerged as *biiwaabikowaabo gaa-waawaageshkaag*, reversed to “a liquid metal that shines brightly” in English. In witnessing these translation sessions and observing the language and its speakers, we have learned that Anishinaabemowin is creational, constantly renewing itself without relying on foreign terms. It is not just a means of communication but a vessel for culture and spirituality, inherently carrying teachings, traditions, and values. As Memashkawigaabaw once shared, some Elders speak “spiritual Ojibwe,” a form of the language that is “loaded with culture” and remains “untouched by residential schools.” Anishinaabemowin is also action-based, in contrast to the noun-heavy structure of languages like English. This focus on acts mirrors the Anishinaabe teachings that urge responsibility, commitment, and direct action to protect the land and the water.

biiwaabikowaabo gaa-waawaageshkaag ni-v mercury

biiwaabiko = metal iron

waabo = liquid

gaa-waawaageshkaag = it is bright/shiny

Countless pivotal moments have shaped these reflections, sometimes long, meaningful conversations with Elders, friends, and colleagues, who have helped shed light on fragments of these teachings. Beyond the surface, there are individuals deeply committed to restoring ancestral ways, preserving and revitalizing language and culture, and safeguarding the well-being of the land and the water for the survival

of the seventh generation. Many Elders carry and share teachings passed down from those before them, with variations that reflect regional differences, making it impossible to attribute specific words to specific individuals. To protect confidentiality, names and identifiable details have been omitted, except for Memashkawigaabaw, whose spirit name is included with his permission.

In the next section, I will synthesize these experiences and teachings to develop a broader understanding of the various ways of acquiring knowledge. The discussion will examine whether IISD-ELA's practices align with or are perhaps challenged by Anishinaabe perspectives, particularly in how knowledge is gained, relationships are cultivated, and responsibilities are upheld.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

These encounters between worldviews reveal key insights into different modes of knowledge acquisition and highlight the potential for a pluralistic approach to foster transformative dialogue.

The source and mechanism of knowledge acquisition can vary significantly. The scientific approach of IISD-ELA, like any other scientific method, relies on empirical observation and experimentation to address challenges in freshwater systems. The knowledge that the Anishinaabe people carry stems from lived experiences of listening to, conversing with, and learning from *nibi*, which is regarded *not* as a resource but as a relative, a living entity imbued with dignity and honor, deserving of care and protection.

The whole-ecosystem approach of IISD-ELA provides data-driven evidence to inform decision-making in a world dominated by human influence. Anishinaabe advocacy gives voice to water, challenging the utilitarian and anthropocentric worldviews that overlook non-human existence. A holistic approach is made possible by valuing the strengths of both ways of knowing while resisting the one-size-fits-all imposition of epistemic dominance.

This ensures that moral responsibilities toward water are honored.

A shift in perspective occurs when these diverse ways of knowing are brought into dialogue. It is in this convergence that true awareness arises, encouraging practitioners of science and research to recognize that their methods are not the sole pathway to knowledge but one among many equally valuable approaches rooted in ethics and relations.

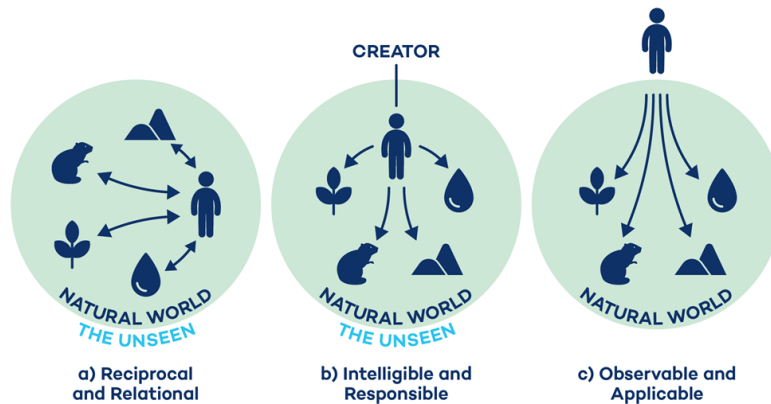
Deep Dive Into Modes of Knowledge Acquisition

Figure 3 was created to help us visualize different modes of knowledge acquisition. There can be many other mechanisms in other knowledge systems; for the sake of relevance, this discussion focuses only on the three presented here.

Knowledge can be gained through reciprocal relationships, as shown in Figure 3-a, where land, animals, plants, and water are not viewed as objects of study but as teachers in their rights. They offer knowledge about themselves and their roles within the broader web of life, and their teachings are recognized and understood by the Anishinaabe people.

Figure 3

Modes of Acquiring Knowledge



Source: Author.

This differs from observational learning (see Figure 3-c), where the observer is separated from the observed, and

knowledge is acquired by studying an object's behavior, such as watching a beaver build a dam to understand its actions and their consequences. In contrast, when the beaver is acknowledged as a teacher, the knowledge exchange is no longer one-sided. The beaver imparts its instinctual knowledge, revealing its role in maintaining balance in the natural world. This concept of a non-human teacher can be unsettling to a science-oriented mind that's accustomed to analyzing the natural world through data and numbers.

Moreover, knowledge is not acquired in isolation from action but through ethical engagement with the relatives by acting with care and respect toward land, water, plants, and animals. Thus, knowing and doing are inseparable. Knowledge is formed and accumulated through good acts by treating all relatives with kindness and respect. This aligns with the action-based nature of Anishinaabemowin, which emphasizes responsibilities. As a learner working to recover the Ojibwe language, Memashkawigaabaw reflects on how a strong grasp of the language has transformed his view of nature, stating, "I started seeing things move through Anishinaabemowin" (Memashkawigaabaw, personal communication, February 2024).

Manito Aki Inaakonigewin, the Great Earth Law of Treaty #3, like many other Anishinaabe laws, is from the Creator (Grand Council Treaty #3, 2023). It states that "law-making comes from the Creator's way of life, passed on through ancestral stories, songs, and teachings." (Grand Council Treaty #3, 2023). As shown in Figure 3-b, human beings are gifted with the intellect to learn and build relationships within creation, recognizing that we are part of it. The Creator's law doesn't prioritize human rights. Still, it emphasizes the rights of all relatives, assigning humans the responsibility to care for them.

The interactions among the created transcend physicality. Anishinaabe Elders often speak of making offerings to spirits (beings from the unseen world). The ceremony, therefore, holds meaning on multiple levels: it is an act of honoring our relatives and doing right by them while also inviting the good spirits from the unseen world to assist in caring for the well-being of all creations. This again challenges a secular mind that only acknowl-

edges the observable world.

It's worth clarifying that highlighting the differences among these mechanisms of knowledge acquisition is not to determine which is superior or inferior. The approach shown in Figure 3-c is valuable for honing in on compartments, and it is through this method that we have gained a detailed understanding of water at its molecular level as H₂O. However, by acknowledging other ways of acquiring knowledge, we ensure that we don't become so absorbed in dissecting the parts that we lose sight of the whole.

Reflecting on IISD-ELA's Approach

IISD-ELA's approach to freshwater research is innovative in integrating multiple compartments of freshwater science, offering a comprehensive investigation often missing in isolated lab-based studies. This holistic method, in a way, reflects the interconnectedness central to the Anishinaabe worldview. Technological advancements also shape research practices, and with improved testing technology, IISD-ELA has pioneered non-lethal fish sampling, which is a more ethical way to work with animals. Thus, grounding scientific practices in the ethical framework of Anishinaabe teachings promotes the development of responsible technological applications in research, moving beyond purely utilitarian outcomes.

As mentioned in the Methodology, ceremonies at IISD-ELA act as a reminder for scientists, researchers, and students to honor water and build a deeper connection with the lakes they study. Participating in these ceremonies encourages active reflection on water's significance, and some have begun making offerings to the lakes, with the Elders' permission, before proceeding with sampling activities.

While it is promising to see a shift in how Anishinaabe perspectives are perceived, the challenge lies in making these ways of knowing more visible and present in the awareness of those within IISD-ELA. In the next section, I will summarize the discussions and offer recommendations for IISD-ELA's ongoing engagement with local knowledge, as well as for others working with knowledge who may find these insights beneficial.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The scientific method follows a structured process of inquiry. Therefore, advocating for a pluralistic approach does not mean altering scientific practices but reconsidering their positioning. There is an opportunity to reimagine and root it in the moral codes of Indigenous worldviews. In the context of IISD-ELA, this means anchoring the whole ecosystem practice of freshwater science within the Anishinaabe ethical framework to foster connections with the lakes, land, trees, fish, and all other beings. How can this be done?

Scientific methods are taught and implemented by people—scientists, researchers, and educators—who bring their assumptions and ways of understanding the world into their work. Thus, the shift is about reshaping the mindset of those who practice them through creating space for the encounter of worldviews, where discomfort is embraced, difficult questions are asked, and mistakes become part of the learning process. More than just an intellectual exercise, this process invites scientists, researchers, and educators to engage with Indigenous perspectives in a way that is relational and experiential.

A key aspect of the Anishinaabe worldview is that understanding the world cannot be separated from living in harmony with it. This perspective demands more than intellectual recognition of the significance of water—it requires action. Participation in ceremonies offers a tangible way to move beyond verbal commitments, embodying respect for water, land, and all relatives. While the spiritual connections formed through ceremonies may be elusive or challenging to grasp from a secular perspective, they remain essential in cultivating an ethical and relational approach to knowledge.

For scientists, researchers, and colleagues working at the intersection of multiple worldviews, it is essential to recognize the paradigms that shape their approach to knowledge. Engagement with diverse knowledge systems should be approached with humility and a willingness to learn, resisting the impulse to impose a dominant framework. It is also crucial to actively seek ways to mend and strengthen relationships with water, plants,

animals, and all beings involved in research, guided by the ethical framework inherent in Indigenous worldviews.

To conclude on the topic of water, I invite readers to reflect on the United Nations resolution that recognizes that everyone has the right to access clean water, acknowledging the fundamental human right to clean water and highlighting a significant global issue. Is there space to also recognize the rights of water? Could we complete this resolution, which has now been in place for over a decade, by adding what has long been missing—that everyone has the *right* to access clean water? Everyone has the *responsibility* to protect and care for water. Perhaps, by repairing our relationship with water, we will uncover new insights and approaches to address this ongoing and persistent issue.

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A Phenomenology of the Learning Journey of Graduates of the Master of Arts in Teaching Filipino of Two Universities in the Province of Bohol

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ABSTRACT

The standards implemented by the Commission on Higher Education for graduate schools are contained in a seemingly capsulized set of descriptors such as better knowledge and skills and lifelong learning. Considering the criteria above, this study aimed to explore the transformation of students in terms of their knowledge and skills, shaped by their social contexts, through their experiences in the Master of Arts in Teaching Filipino program. The research is based on interviews with 12 graduates from two universities in Bohol. According to transformative learning theory, professionals experience a sense of disorientation that motivates them to thoroughly examine their knowledge, skills, and practices, ultimately leading to generalizations that deepen their understanding of their experiences. From the responses of the participants, it can be said that their pedagogical knowledge and skills, subject content and the 21st century, and the social context such as equipment and facilities, colleagues and collaborators, and curriculum have helped in their personal and professional transformation. However, they also had disorientations that made them aware of the reality of their profession, the education system, and the society they live in. Therefore, it can be said that although the two universities are effective partners in the students' learning journey, there is still room for enhancement in their approach to fostering meaningful development.

Keywords: Disorientation, professional development, transformative learning, transformation, CHED descriptors

INTRODUCTION

This study reflects the researcher's advocacy. With over a decade of experience teaching in the master's program in Teaching Filipino, the researcher carefully selects practices and approaches for each course every semester, driven by the continuous pursuit of the most effective teaching method. Efforts are made to continuously refine methods with the goal of shaping the ideal graduate profile for the program aligned with the new Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSG) of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which emphasize these descriptors, particularly the development of advanced knowledge and skills, self-directed research, and lifelong learning, self-direction/leadership, and high substantial degree of independence.

Buenvinida and Yazon (2017) confirmed in their research that graduate studies are a way to improve the skills and abilities of professional teachers in the performance of their teaching duties, improving the capacity of students, and managing learning programs. In fact, this is what prompted the researcher to determine which knowledge and skills were meaningful to the students taught and the classroom work. It is also important to prove that the standards and learning opportunities in graduate studies have helped shape an individual undergoing professional development.

Professional development is an aspiration that may be personally motivated or prompted by a job or career need. To achieve this, it is necessary to promote it under the supervision of other professionals within an institution. However, mature and professional students have experiences in their schooling and outside of schooling that are more appropriate to their age and more beneficial to their transformation.

Derived from Mezirow's (1978) Transformational Learning, based on the study of women who returned to work after several years of family care, learning depends not only on

information and skills but on changing beliefs. According to Mezirow, it is a process of reinterpreting the prior perspective as a guide to the future (Dochy et al., 2011). Gordon (2003) and DeAngelis (2019) identified that the center of transformational learning is a disorienting dilemma. DeAngelis described that a person becomes aware of the impact of his beliefs, thoughts, and actions on his identity. However, the impact is not the same for each individual. As one grows older, some problems cannot be solved immediately and require careful analysis—a process in which a person discovers aspects that need to be replaced, changed, or focused in a different direction.

On the other hand, this timely influence of Descriptor 7 from the PSG of CHED and the Sustainable Development Goals and the priority action areas such as transforming learning environments and building capacities of educators, according to Glavič (2020) is focused on empowering teachers to change themselves and society while that has to do with advanced knowledge and skills in the specialized field of training, self-directed research, lifelong learning and the application of aforementioned professional skills and creative writing.

Therefore, this research aims to obtain a picture of the transformation of the graduates of the Master of Arts in Teaching Filipino in the universities of the province of Bohol in relation to their learning experiences and the practice of their profession. Specifically, it intends to identify the transformations that occurred in the individual graduates after self-evaluation and critical assessment of inferences about knowledge and skills in their role performance as Teacher, Community member, Researcher, Author or writer, and Institution/school administrator. Eventually, the conducted research will help to contribute a new perspective and methods to the teaching of professors with the help of culturally transformative improvement methods.

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative research based on a phenomenological approach with the purpose of discovering the

"disorienting dilemma" of the graduates of Master of Arts in Teaching Filipino at two universities in the province of Bohol in relation to their performance of their duties. In accordance with Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology mentioned in Randall's (2014) study, the data analysis of Van Manen includes interviewing respondents with similar experiences data analysis using transcription codes, including the researcher's reflections while undergoing data collection and analysis. The data analysis made use of thematic analysis. The sample came from teachers who graduated with a Master of Arts in Teaching Filipino in the Academic Year 2015-2021 from two universities in the province of Bohol. Data were analyzed according to stages: first: Clarification of Views, second: Lived Experiences, and third: Limiting Lived Experience-Structural Stage; Fourth: Writing about Limiting Lived Experience with Integration of Specific Structures into General Structures. In relation to the conflict of interest, the researcher ensures that there is no personal relationship with any agency. There is no favor or benefit to any party, whether researcher, participant, or third party, except to present clear and objective results. It was also ensured that the participants read and signed the informed consent form, the freedom to withdraw or stop participating and that there was no implied harm in their participation. There is also no implication of the data collected on the state or honor of the university involved in the research. Its purpose is to develop the teaching method at the graduate level, especially in the Master of Art in Teaching Filipino program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In general, the teachers' transformation from their learning journey was positive. All of them realized that their studies in graduate school under the Master of Arts in Teaching Filipino or MAT-FIL contributed to their development in skills and knowledge for their role performance either as a teacher, community member, researcher, author or writer, and institution or school administrator. However, there are also surprising and surprising disorientations. It can be found in the lower part after discussing the different transformations

according to the performance of the different roles of the participants.

Similar to the second problem, the answers of the participants were sorted, and sub-themes were identified. Sub-themes can be grouped into two: Personal Transformation and Professional Transformation in their role performance as a teacher, community member, researcher, author or writer, and institution or school administrator.

Teacher. It was as a teacher that the participants realized the **personal transformation**, and some expressed that they became more prepared in the physical and mental aspects. Teacher 4 and Teacher 7 indicated self-confidence. For Teacher 4, their graduate studies opened them up to pursue post-graduate studies. For Teacher 7, they gained self-confidence in teaching Filipino at the secondary and tertiary levels. This is also the reason for Teacher 11 to be confident and creative in teaching.

For Teacher 10, the lesson "Alegorya sa Yungib" (Allegory of the Cave), written by Plato, served as a mirror to their experience, which indicated that they needed to see reality in order to understand what they should do. Teacher 1 also said that experiences are a big contribution because not everything is learned in the classroom.

Their experiences in their teaching careers shaped the teachers' professional transformation. Through their graduate studies, Teacher 3 learned to adapt and integrate modern teaching methods using technology. Similarly, Teacher 5 realized the importance of diversifying creative activities to keep students engaged and prevent boredom. In line with this, Teacher 10 consistently emphasized the need to take things slowly and adjust to the students and their needs.

Member of the Community. As a member of the community, the transformation as a teacher of the participants was confirmed in their experiences after their analysis and assessment of the inferences related to their performance in the role.

In their **transformation**, Teacher 1 realized that his social and spiritual aspects related to community work had expanded. Similar to Teacher 1, Teacher 2 experienced an expansion in his social aspect. From being shy, he now knows how to keep up and participate in community activities.

Teacher 7 says that their transformation is their awareness of the cultures and traditions of their community. According to them, "*Higit na nagkaroon ako ng kamalayan sa mga kultura at tradisyon sa aming pamayanan at bukas din sa aking isipan na tangkilikin ang ibat ibang sining sa bansa.*" [I became more aware of the cultures and traditions in our community, and I am also open to enjoying different arts in the country.] The transformation of Teacher 7 is also related to his recognition that the culture of the country is rich, and it is only necessary to explore it.

The personal transformation of Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 is in their interaction with their community. Therefore, the teacher's constant knowledge and interaction with the community he belongs to as a professional is necessary.

In the **professional transformation**, Teacher 4 said that it is expected to 'level up' because the level has already been reached. Teacher 6 appreciated how to communicate. Teacher 8 focused on new information and valued information from his graduate and post-graduate teaching.

Teacher 3 had experience working outside the teaching profession. However, they were surprised by the additional responsibilities assigned to them. They shared: "*Nakuratan pod ko nga ingon ana diay ang set-up—aside from purely focusing on teaching, lessons, and competencies, there are still other tasks...*" ["I was surprised that the set-up is like that—aside from solely focusing on teaching, lessons, and competencies, there are still other responsibilities..."]

Teacher 8, on the other hand, experienced a transformation in their profession through their teaching journey in a rural town in Bohol. They had to adjust their expectations to understand the realities faced by students who were often absent—not out of neglect, but because they needed

to help their families. This realization became clear through their continuous reflection:

"Before, bata pa kami, pumupunta kami dito, hindi ko naa-appreciate ang lugar na ito kasi kapag pumupunta kami sa bahay ng lola ko, wala talagang ilaw, puro bukid. Walang tindahan, tapos pakiramdam ko sobrang layo ng Danao. Pero nang binigyan ako ng item... okay lang naman dahil lugar ito ng mama ko. Parang doon ko na lang na-appreciate at na-differentiate ang lifestyle ng mga bata sa Tagbilaran at dito. Kapag may batang nagsabi, 'Ma'am, puwede bang mag-absent kami? Kailangan po naming mag-ani,' dati parang nagagalit pa ako. *'Ha? Kailangan bang ikaw mismo ang nandoon?'* Pero habang tumatagal, mas nakita ko ang hirap ng buhay nila. Napagtanto ko na kailangan talaga nating pahalagahan ang ganitong mga bata, kasi pagkatapos nilang mag-ani, minsan makikita mong nagmamadali pa silang pumasok sa paaralan. Kailangan lang talaga nilang mag-absent, kasi kung hindi, wala silang makakain. Mas naintindihan ko ngayon ang kahalagahan ng sinasabi nilang pagpapababa ng standard—hindi para pababain ang kalidad ng edukasyon, kundi upang maunawaan ang tunay na kalagayan ng mga estudyante."*

[Before, when I was young, we used to come here, but I didn't appreciate this place. When we visited my grandmother's house, there was no electricity—just fields everywhere. There were no stores, and I felt like Danao was so far away. But when I was assigned here, I realized it was my mother's hometown, and that's when I started appreciating and understanding the difference in lifestyles between children in Tagbilaran and those here. When students ask, 'Ma'am, can we be absent? We need to help with the harvest,' I used to get frustrated. *'Why do you have to be the one there?'* But over time, I saw how difficult their situation was. I learned to appreciate their struggles because, after the harvest, I would see them rushing to school. They needed to be absent—not out of

laziness, but because if they didn't help, their families wouldn't have anything to eat. That's when I truly understood what it means to lower our standards—not to compromise learning, but to meet students where they are and recognize their realities.]

This experience deepened Teacher 8's appreciation for the resilience and determination of their students, reshaping their perspective on education and compassion in teaching.

It is evident that only a few teachers explicitly recognized their direct relationship with the community when sharing their experiences. Despite this, the insights they gained in their roles as community members are remarkable. The limited instances of teachers discussing their experiences in relation to their community involvement should not be seen as a weakness of the research. In fact, when asked, participants openly acknowledged that they did not perceive a strong or visible connection with their community, as exemplified by Teacher 11's statement. This suggests that the structural format and questioning method of the study may have influenced their responses, which can be considered a limitation of the research.

The researcher's analysis of related literature, particularly Bourn (2016), supports this perspective: "*Teaching has always been seen as more than just another profession or job.*" Similarly, Hansen described teaching as a "*moral practice.*" At the same time, Fullan emphasized that "*scratch a good teacher, and you will find a moral purpose.*" This evolving moral purpose shapes teachers' methods and approaches, guiding them toward fulfilling their role not just as educators but as influencers of positive change. Teachers play a crucial role in sharing their values and perspectives with students, motivating them to learn and actively participate in society. At the same time, they must also refine their understanding of their personal and professional development needs.

In light of Bourn's observations and the participants' experiences, it can be inferred that even if some teachers did not explicitly express their transformation as members of the community, the impact of their role is deeply embedded in their hearts.

Researcher

Similar to the previously discussed roles, the participants realized that their transformation is linked to both **personal transformation** and **professional transformation**, which serve as the thematic framework for the following analyses.

Regarding **personal transformation**, Teacher 2 reflected on their experiences as a researcher while pursuing a Master of Arts degree in graduate school. They acknowledged the challenge of balancing work and academic responsibilities, even managing to attend seminars while working on their research. At one point, they considered giving up entirely. However, they never forgot how their adviser encouraged them to persist. "*Pero lahat ng iyon ay aking nilabanan*" (*But I fought through all of it*), the teacher emphasized, highlighting their determination to achieve the highest academic distinction. Meanwhile, Teacher 1 noted that their perspective and understanding of various matters had broadened as a result of their experiences.

The **professional transformation** of the teacher-participants emerged through self-reflection. Both Teacher 2 and Teacher 10 realized the importance of pursuing further studies at the postgraduate level to expand their knowledge and skills.

At this stage of their career, Teacher 2 has been able to apply their graduate school research output in practice. They mentioned that the intervention they developed—after identifying students' reading weaknesses through the ORVT-Phil-IRI assessment—is now actively in use and proving beneficial. Similarly, Teacher 4, having completed their postgraduate studies, was inspired to conduct research related to Filipino and continue publishing research articles.

Teacher 7, on the other hand, found the courage to deepen their study of the country's culture to help enrich and intellectualize the Filipino language.

Teacher 8's reflections and transformation focused on their classroom experience. For them, when it comes to research, students should experience the research process firsthand,

reinforcing the importance of integrating research into the learning environment.

Author or Writer. The transformation of the participants in their role as writers is closely tied to their **professional transformation**.

Teacher 1 experienced a shift in belief after reflecting on their knowledge and skills, becoming more critical and cautious in their writing. It can be recalled that they previously mentioned how this was one of the key competencies they developed during their graduate studies. Similarly, Teacher 7 realized that their writing skills had significantly improved, especially as they continued to write literary works such as essays, short stories, and poetry, which they shared on social media. This platform allowed them to discover and further cultivate their creative thinking skills.

Thus, as **authors or writers**, the participants' transformation is mainly **professional**. Their perspective shifted towards being more critical and meticulous in writing. Additionally, their writing was no longer confined to traditional spaces, as social media became a platform for continuing their literary pursuits.

Institution/School Administrator. In their role as institution or school administrators, the participants developed both **Personal Transformation** and **Professional Transformation**.

Regarding **personal transformation**, Teacher 1 expressed that their understanding and empathy for others had broadened. In their capacity as a coordinator, they realized that not everyone shares the same characteristics. Meanwhile, Teacher 2 demonstrated respect for senior or more experienced educators. Despite holding an administrative role, they still acknowledged the expertise of those who had been in the teaching profession longer.

The participants' professional transformation was also analyzed. Teacher 2 realized that being a coordinator was a privilege, stating, "mora baya pod ug maka-proud nga morag ikaw gisaligan so meaning naa kay edge sa uban". [It somehow

feels rewarding and makes me proud because it means I am trusted, which gives me an edge over others.] For Teacher 1, they served as both a coordinator and mentor to newly hired teachers in their school. Both considered it an honor to be entrusted with such a responsibility.

According to Ellis et al., the School21 program values students who will thrive in the 21st century. These students need 21st-century teachers—trainers and educators, project designers, subject specialists, and language teachers. These teachers serve as partners and architects of learning, critical thinkers who continue to grow through extensive reading, observation, and unlocking students' potential.

Thus, personal transformation in their role as administrators is evident in their expanded understanding and empathy for others, as well as their respect for senior colleagues. Meanwhile, professional transformation is reflected in their realization that being a coordinator is a privilege and in their appreciation of their role in mentoring new teachers.

Disorientation. The **disorienting dilemma** is the core of transformative learning. And this can be summed up in the journey of these graduates: Teacher 1 realized their lack of self-confidence, which led to missed opportunities for professional growth in the situation they shared. For Teacher 3, the unexpected additional workload was overwhelming, as it was not part of their initial expectations. They even mentioned becoming a “jack-of-all-trades” due to the nature of the education system they were part of. Meanwhile, Teacher 8 experienced professional disorientation during their teaching assignment in a rural town in Bohol.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this study can be considered an “a-ha moment” or an awakening for the researcher regarding the transformation brought about by the learning journey of the participants who completed their Master of Arts in Teaching Filipino at two universities in the province of Bohol. The knowledge and skills they acquired from graduate school were beneficial. However, certain new insights and competencies prompted them to revisit

what they had learned, leading to changes in how they fulfilled their roles as teachers, community members, researchers, and authors or writers. On the other hand, some participants expressed incidental transformations arising from their experiences of disorientation. While these experiences heightened their awareness of the realities of their profession and other responsibilities, they still needed a space to express their concerns, anxieties, and perspectives.

It is recommended that a strong association of Filipino language specialists be established at the graduate school level, connections with national organizations of Filipino educators be fostered, and collaborative research across various schools and universities be promoted to strengthen and guide the professional and personal transformation of teachers.

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Traditional Christmas Practices in Antequera, Bohol, and Cultural Preservation Mechanisms

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the Christmas practices known in Antequera, Bohol, and the cultural preservation mechanisms they have done on the practices. Many years ago, this town celebrated Christmas, which made it rich in traditional Christmas practices such as *Igue-igue*, *Pastores*, and *Haring Herudes*, which were performed before, during, and after Christmas, respectively. These were combinations of choral and theater-like movements that were performed depending on the desired venue of the host. The locals performed this tradition with a single desire to give praise to the infant Jesus. Researchers used a Descriptive-Qualitative method and Culture Identity Theory to describe and understand the Christmas practices known and observed in Antequera, Bohol. Results showed that the people of Barangay Angilan, Antequera, worked hard to sustain their Christmas practices. It is just that it was not passed down to the younger generation because of several reasons that prevent

them from doing so. The findings of the study would help them ensure sustainability in the implementation of culture and arts programs and activities that strengthen culture preservation, specifically the preservation of the identified Christmas practices. In conclusion, the three Christmas practices are related to each other. People cannot fully understand the significance of the said practices if they are not able to witness them from the start (Igue-igue, Haring Herudes, and Pastores). Old practices do not automatically mean that they are obsolete already. Young folks can still enjoy it as it has values and wisdom that can be imparted to them.

Keywords: Igue-igue, Pastores, Haring Herudes, traditional Christmas practices, cultural preservation mechanisms

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is known by many as the nation that has the longest celebration of Christmas. With this, most Filipino families start decorating their Christmas trees and putting up their *Belens* on September 1. Different carolers, Christmas-themed performances, and songs are also heard during this season. After months of celebration, it officially ends on the Feast of the Three Kings. For generations, these Spanish-influenced practices were enjoyed, maintained, and passed down.

These Christmas practices were evident in Antequera, Bohol, an inland town that lies in the western part of the island, about 18.5 kilometers from Tagbilaran City. Many years ago, this town celebrated Christmas, which made it rich in traditional Christmas practices. To name a few, the locals had *Igue-Igue*, *Pastores*, and *Haring Herudes*, which were performed before, during, and after Christmas, respectively. These practices were combinations of choral and theater-like movements that were performed depending on the desired venue of the host. The people of Antequera performed this tradition with a single desire to give praise to the infant Jesus.

According to Luspo, in his article entitled 'Daygon' fast disappearing at The Manila Times (December 26, 2015), a

Boholano local cultural historian, each town's history is unique and reflective of Bohol's glorious past and is an important component in designing and planning heritage-based creative hubs. Boholanos have the tradition of preparing something for the birth of Jesus. They decorate their houses with unique Christmas decorations, and they sing old Christmas songs, which are sung from one house to another. It is said to be sung by the old folks when they were still young. However, this old traditional song is seldom practiced because of the rise of modern music. This can be verified in Luspo's statement, as he mentioned that this is due to the emergence and influence of new genres of music, particularly Western music. No one has an interest in learning these Christmas practices because they are afraid of being tagged as outdated.

Another cultural bearer in the name of Simi Guilen, as cited in Bersabal's article (2017), Folk Society's Christmas Musical Tradition Dying in Bohol, said that she is not sure if there would be enough participants that would be gathered because of the lack of interest in today's generation to these practices and this is mainly because of them being too busy with their mobile phones.

This study is anchored on the Cultural Identity Theory that explains the relationship between intercultural competence and cultural identity. This theory deals with how individuals use communicative processes to construct and negotiate their cultural group identities and relationships in particular contexts.

Bohol Arts and Cultural Heritage (BACH) Code seeks to strengthen cultural institutions and regulate even the transfer of cultural properties by requiring appropriate registration. This aims to protect and preserve the province's cultural heritage, properties, and histories to conserve the ethnicity of local communities and the nation as a whole.

The cultural heritage of Antequera is one of the most important assets and elements toward sustainable eco-cultural tourism productivity. Strong support mechanisms are required and are hereby formed by announcing the adherence to both local and international cultural heritage conventions.

Wajdner's (2018) study gives the idea that heritage is a process, and its management should direct people to connect with heritage. It involves helping communities understand themselves and listening to how they identify what is important to them. The government has a primary role in raising the people's awareness of their cultural legacy. The people should be part of every cultural process of development. The people should be involved in the process by letting them be part of the cultural heritage management.

Many Filipinos give more importance to the cultural practices where they find their true group identity and communal values. The values derived from their practices, which are translations of their knowledge and belief about Christmas as associated with festivities and spirituality, are believed to have been directly or indirectly influenced by the beliefs and practices brought by the tradition they later acquired. These Christian traditions are adapted in life based on judgment and decision. The community practices help people affirm their communal identity and thereby enrich their family values (Del Castillo, 2020).

This study sought to determine the Christmas practices known in Antequera, Bohol, and the cultural preservation mechanisms they have done on the practices. The questions focus on the known Christmas practices in Antequera, the challenges that keep the tradition going, its significance, and the mechanisms that support the identified Christmas practices. Some sub-questions involved the period when these practices were held; the music used and their movements, the participants and their roles, the preparation done by the community, and the values enhanced by the said practices. Furthermore, this study sought to rediscover the Christmas practices in Antequera and the initiative that the support mechanisms can take to overcome the community's challenges to keep those traditions going. The findings of the study would help them ensure sustainability in the implementation of culture and arts programs and activities that strengthen culture preservation, specifically the preservation of the identified Christmas practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive-qualitative research method. It is used to describe and understand the Christmas practices known and observed in Antequera, Bohol, specifically related to the following: *Igue-igue*, *Pastores*, and *Haring Herudes*, the support mechanism provided to safeguard and sustain these practices, and the challenges faced by the community in keeping the traditions going. A qualitative method was used to document the present status of their Christmas practices and to know what inspired the Antequeranons to continue and develop these traditions. The researchers chose Antequera, specifically barangay Angilan, because, in the past, they were known for doing these Christmas practices, and they were able to perform both in and out of Antequera through invitations. However, people seem to have forgotten it.

The participants of the study were the performers of the three Christmas practices, namely: *Igue-igue*, *Pastores*, *Haring Herudes*, and their respective choreographers. The researchers indicated that there were seven performers and three choreographers. Since three Christmas practices were being studied, the researchers decided to have one choreographer in each practice. *Igue-igue* and *Pastores* had two respondents, while *Haring Herudes* had three. To ensure the credibility of the participants, a criterion was set, such as performers of the practice, age, and knowledge about the practice. The age range was 50 to 70 years old. To check the performer's knowledge about the Christmas practices, the researchers asked them about their roles or part and their experiences while doing the said practice. The representatives of the Church and other institutions were selected according to their age (50-70), knowledge, and length of service (more than 40 years). The researchers respected the rights of the participants to participate in the study. They have the right to decline or withdraw from the study.

The researchers used guide questions for the LGU of Antequera, Bohol, particularly in Church and other institutions, in relation to the rediscovering of the traditional Christmas

practices in the town. [The study used the informal, structured, iterative interview.](#)

They followed the protocols and ethical considerations in research. There were two versions of this letter, English and Cebuano. They also asked for the participants' permission to record and take pictures of the interview for documentation purposes. There was no conflict of interest in this study. Their names and any other details were optional in the data collection for confidentiality and privacy purposes. All of the information collected was respected and trusted. They were given an informed consent form to sign as an agreement. All respondents were not forced to include all of the details requested by the researchers. They had the right to withdraw their participation during the study. The vulnerability of all the respondents was strictly prohibited from any publications for safety and privacy and to avoid risky circumstances. The researchers informed the respondents of whatever the findings would be.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There were three Christmas practices identified: *Igue-igue*, *Haring Herudes*, and *Pastores Igue-igue* came from the act of rejecting others from entering the house, especially if they were poor. This practice is theater-like because it is a combination of singing and drama. In the first and second stanzas, Joseph and Mary, the singers, seek a place where they can rest after a long trip from Judea. In this scene, as they head towards their destination, they are knocking on random houses, asking for the owner's permission to let them in. Following this, the "*Igue-igue*," who acts as the homeowner, will ask Joseph and Mary to introduce themselves to assure that they are not thieves, especially since it is already late at night. Their response was in the form of singing. They introduce themselves as a poor couple and relative of the "*tig-igue*." However, they were declined because all their relatives were rich, and no one was named Joseph or Mary, who came from a low-income family. The performers who played Mary and Joseph will answer in a singing way, begging to allow them to stay even at the stairs on

that night. Unfortunately, the "igue-igue" did not agree to their plea; instead, he suggested they proceed to the manger.

This uncommon practice was done before the birth of Christ, as it shows the complicated journey of Mary and Joseph in searching for a house that will welcome them despite being strangers. It had a combination of singing and drama through *Igue*, in which the character acted as if he was angry as he drove Mary and Joseph away. Among the three Christmas practices, Igue-igue had the least number of members, and it only required a short time to practice. The participants practice days before the actual presentation, and they don't have any formal costumes unless it is for a competition. The costumes were not required unless it was a competition. The values enhanced in this Christmas practice were commitment and passion. It enhances commitment because to produce quality performance, the performers need to be committed to practicing. Also, keeping the tradition going requires commitment, especially in the face of unknown circumstances. If there is commitment, it automatically equates to passion. According to the performers, since they were children, they had already seen how passionate their father was doing the said Christmas practice they could adapt to growing up. It is not only for entertainment purposes, but it means more than that. It is a way of preserving a long Christmas tradition passed down from one generation to another.

"Haring Herodes" is based on the biblical story of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah. When Jesus Christ was born in the town of Bethlehem, Herod was the king in Jerusalem in search of the baby born to be the king of the Jews. A miracle scene is shown when Joseph and Mary, on their escape flight to safety, come across a shepherdess, "Bakera," sowing wheat. Still, as they walked past, the newly sown seeds sprouted, bore fruit, and ripened so that she was already harvesting wheat when the killer soldiers came and found the impossibility of finding the target couple and their child.

The script is composed of the lines of every character involved in the street play. The story culminates with a sword

fight between the brave shepherd mother, "Bakera," who vowed to save the baby boy but was vanquished, and her poor baby boy was beheaded by the Roman soldiers. This practice was the most awaited event during the Christmas season. The participants allocated one month for memorizing the lines and another month for the props making and their actual practice wherein the steps were taught. Regarding their costumes, the barangay only had the budget for the main character.

In contrast, the rest of the participants would be the ones to provide their costumes. It was unique because it was a combination of dancing, singing, drama, and the *komparsa*, which provided the overall music. Out of the three Christmas practices, Haring Herudes was the most intricate as it requires longer preparation both in practice and props-making. Every detail needed to be well-planned, and coordination was necessary between the performers and the musicians. In order to produce a quality performance, the barangay and the people who were part of Haring Herudes needed to allocate enough money and manpower. By performing and watching this Christmas practice, the enhanced values were solidarity, faith, and knowledge.

The researchers analyzed that having Haring Herudes made their culture colorful. The values enhanced in this Christmas tradition are creativity, patience, and solidarity. Creativity was evident in the way they told the story about this biblical event, which drew the attention of many people. Their joy in doing this practice is reflected in their eyes, which shows that they gave honor and pride to it. The tradition also enhances patience because of the long duration it takes to prepare the props, memorize the lines of the characters, and the actual practice. Also, the value of solidarity is strengthened with this tradition because the people of barangay Angilan were cooperative with the success of the performance. They willingly dedicate their time and effort to make it possible and memorable. The movements shown by the participants are only part of what she can remember in her performance.

Pastores are shepherds who went to Bethlehem with happiness to see the Son of Mary. These are joyful hymns with a

consistent message telling people to rejoice because the Savior was born. The shepherds' admiration is traditionally expressed by singing and dancing from one house to the next. It is frequently played by youngsters or teenagers in brightly colored clothes. The majority of them are female and wear lengthy skirts, puffed-sleeved round-necked shirts, and wide-brimmed hats. The *Pastores* sing about the shepherds who came to see the baby Jesus in the manger. The cheerful mood made dancing inevitable. Women wear caps with red ribbons and bring *castañuelas*. Their practice and costume preparation took two months to complete. Homeowners reward them with money, just as they do with traditional carolers.

It was amazing in the sense that it combined two movements, namely choral and theater, which made it more enjoyable for those watching it. Unlike Haring Herudes, its ways are not that time-consuming to prepare or practice. It also enhanced the value of Faith. Since *Pastores* is a part of the Nativity story, it further strengthens the faith of the people as Jesus Christ, who they believed to be the Savior, has come to the world to save the people from their sins. The faith of the youth is also strengthened because they were able to experience the tradition firsthand. The experience that they got from this can be an effective instrument to spread the faith.

Since the practices were based on the initiative of the people of *Barangay* Angilan, the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Antequera was not able to support it. Regarding funding, the LGU cannot give any assistance because there were no formal letters addressed to the municipal mayor or vice mayor. This is one of the reasons why the Christmas practices vanished; people from that time became unmotivated due to the limited budget of the barangay. Back then, the LGU knew about these Christmas practices because they were performed in and out of the municipality. Still, due to the lack of communication, they were not able to support them. According to the key informant, with the Church having its events during Christmas, the said three practices were not focused enough because of how hectic the schedule was during this time of the year. It was said that there was a preparation for the *Simbang Gabi* and a reenactment of the Nativity story. There was also a recreation of the Christmas

star descending from the sky and going to the manger where Christ was born. With this, the Church does not give attention to the barangay's Christmas practices because the Nativity summarizes the story of Igue-igue, Haring Herudes, and Pastores.

The performers cannot fully showcase the uniqueness and the values that people can get from the three Christmas practices because the Church did not emphasize them. According to the respondents, there were preparations for the Simbang Gabi as well as a reenactment of the Nativity story. The Christmas star was also reenacted, going from the sky to the manger where Jesus was born. The Church, therefore, overlooks the Barangay's Christmas practices since the Nativity summarizes Igue-igue, Haring Herudes, and Pastores.

According to the respondents, they did not receive any support from other institutions, such as schools and non-governmental organizations, because these Christmas practices were rooted in the barangay initiative. Just like the preceding two, the other institutions had nothing to do with it because, at that time, even if they were aware of these Christmas practices, they could not still intervene because it was all rooted in the initiative of the barangay. There were several reasons why these Christmas practices no longer exist. In terms of other institutions, there was a lack of coordination between them and the barangay.

According to an informant, the Christmas practices were not properly passed down to the younger generation because of the constant modernization, the death of the performers, and others forgetting how actually to do it. In addition, the costumes and some of the instruments were already gone and damaged because of time and other natural phenomena. Furthermore, there was a need for a bigger budget in order to produce a quality performance. Others may see it as mere Christmas practices, but in reality, it impacted the community, especially the people. In addition, they also had historical and cultural significance.

Three Christmas practices were identified in this study. Igue-igue is performed before Christmas. It is theater-like

because it has a combination of singing and drama through *Igue*, in which the character acts as if he is angry as he drives Mary and Joseph away. The participants of the said Christmas practice depend on who wants to join the practice or the performance itself. On the other hand, Haring Herudes is performed during and after Christmas. It is also theater-like because it has a combination of dancing, singing, drama, and the *komparsa*, which provide the overall music. Participants are the people of *Barangay Angilan*, especially the barangay officials.

In total, there were 21 members (16 performers and five *komparsa* members). Lastly, for Pastores, it is performed after Christmas until the celebration of the three kings. It is a combination of choral-like and theater-like movements because it is composed of singing while dancing to the music of the *komparsa*. There were 12 performers, all females, and five *Komparsa* members. Both the practices and the performers (Haring Herudes and Pastores) originated in Antequera.

In contrast, the performers of Igue-igue came from Dorol, Balilihan. Still, they became known for performing the Christmas practice in Antequera. Although the Christmas practices differ when it comes to their props and costumes, they have one thing in common: accompanying musicians. To perform well, enough time and manpower are required to prepare the materials or equipment. The significance of these practices was to celebrate Christmas and provide knowledge about what happened on the journey of the birth of Christ. It also served as entertainment during the Christmas season. These practices allowed the people to reminisce about the journey of His birth and the hardships that His parents went through.

The practices united people from different walks of life. It also strengthened their faith because of the lessons that they can get. The knowledge they gained from doing and watching the said practices enabled the spectators to share it with the younger ones.

The preparation for Igue-igue happens days before the actual performance. For Haring Herudes, the preparation is estimated for 2 months, and when it comes to making their props, they help each other. In Pastores, they spend an

estimated two months to prepare for the props, costumes, and practice. The values enhanced in Igue-igue and Haring Herudes are solidarity, faith, and knowledge. In *Pastores*, the values enhanced are rejoice, faith, solidarity, and knowledge.

For the support mechanism, the LGU of Antequera, the Church, and other institutions had nothing to do with it. These practices are the result of the initiative of the people of Barangay Angilan.

The Christmas practices were not present anymore due to the constant modernization, the death of the performers, and others forgetting how to do it. In addition, the costumes and some of the instruments were already gone and damaged because of time and other natural phenomena. There is also a need for a bigger budget to achieve a high-quality performance. The attention of the people is diverted, especially those in the Local Government Unit and the Church, so as a result, these practices were not given enough attention.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The people of Barangay Angilan, Antequera, and Bohol worked hard to sustain their Christmas traditions. It is just that it was not passed down to the younger generation because several reasons prevent them from doing so. People cannot fully understand the significance of these practices if they are not able to witness them from the start. Old practices do not automatically mean that they are obsolete already. Young folks can still enjoy it as it has values and wisdom that can be imparted to them. That is why the preservation of these social practices is important so that future generations will still be able to see it and feel a sense of pride in what it is like to have a rich culture.

The LGU, specifically the Council for Culture and Arts, shall strengthen and ensure the sustainability and implementation of cultural arts programs that promote cultural preservation, such as Christmas practices. In order to continuously promote the culture, the people of the community may interact and help LGU to safeguard and preserve their

practices. Non-government organizations such as schools and churches that advocate for culture preservation can actively participate and collaborate with the Local Government Unit and the community.

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The Sociocultural Context of the Eskaya Tribe: Preserving Heritage Amid Modern Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to describe the sociocultural practices of the *Eskaya* tribe in Taytay, Duero, Bohol, using ethnographic research and PESTEL analysis. The findings highlight key aspects of the tribe's political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal systems, emphasizing their cultural significance and need for preservation. The Eskaya tribe sustains itself through gardening and farming. It reflects a simple rural lifestyle intertwined with unique cultural practices, including their indigenous language, mathematical numeration, and writing system. The study underscores the critical role of education, policy, and research in safeguarding these cultural elements. Initiatives like the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program and enhanced training in the Eskayan script are pivotal in promoting cultural awareness. Policy measures are vital for protecting the tribe's ancestral domain and natural resources amid social and environmental changes that threaten traditional values. Ethnographic observations and interviews with teachers, parents, and students revealed the tribe's vibrant social practices, celebrations, and indigenous technological methods in farming. The legal framework provided by the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (RA 8371) supports their rights and cultural heritage. Ultimately, the study advocates for increased awareness and deeper research to preserve and celebrate the Eskaya tribe's unique identity for future generations.

Keywords: Eskaya tribe, ethnographic research, preservation, sociocultural practices

INTRODUCTION

This research has been derived from my doctoral research, an ethnomathematics and sociocultural study of the Eskaya tribe. Despite not being from the Eskaya tribe, I became fascinated by their unique sociocultural and ethnomathematical practices. This is an initial background and phase one of the systematics review conducted as part of the Dynamic components of Janiola's Ethnolearning Theory.

Culture significantly shapes and influences an individual's way of life, providing a framework of values, beliefs, and practices that define a society. As Panopio (2007) emphasizes, culture is a complex whole, comprising the social heritage and design for living within a community. The continuous changes brought about by the 21st century have posed challenges to the preservation of cultural identities, particularly among indigenous groups. These changes affect societies, cultures, and personalities, as Panopio and Santico-Rolda (2007) highlight.

The Eskaya tribe of Bohol exemplifies this dynamic. As one of the Philippines' indigenous cultural communities, the Eskaya face the challenge of preserving their sociocultural practices amidst increasing globalization and modern influences. Their distinct language, traditional practices, and unique ethnomathematical systems underscore the need for cultural preservation. This study focuses on documenting and analyzing the sociocultural context of the Eskaya tribe through ethnographic methods and PESTEL analysis to explore the impact of political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors on their cultural heritage.

Preservation is not only a cultural necessity but also a constitutional mandate in the Philippines. Article XIV, Section 17 of the 1987 Constitution obligates the State to recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities. This includes promoting their cultural development and protecting their ancestral lands as stipulated

in Article XII, Section 5. This research aligns with these legal provisions, contributing to the cultural, social, and educational well-being of the Eskaya.

Furthermore, this study addresses gaps in the literature, particularly in the intersection of sociocultural practices and ethnomathematics within indigenous groups. By examining the Eskaya tribe, the research aims to bridge the past and the future, enriching the field of mathematics education through the integration of indigenous practices. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for curriculum development, enhancing students' understanding and appreciation of their cultural and mathematical roots.

The Eskaya tribe is a small indigenous group located in Bohol, Philippines, with a population of 1,537 distributed across Duero, Pilar, and Guindulman. Their rich culture, including the "Ineskaya" language and traditional practices, remains vulnerable to external influences. As observed in similar studies, such as Cadorna's (2015) research on the Agta in the Sierra Madre, indigenous cultural systems are deeply intertwined with survival needs and natural resource availability. These systems form a foundation for educational practices and cultural preservation efforts, ensuring sustainability amidst technological advancements.

According to Guha and Ismail (2015), social change often challenges traditional societies, altering patterns of interaction and cultural practices. However, these changes also offer opportunities for documentation and preservation before practices are lost. In the context of the Eskaya, their unique syllabary and traditional songs provide a cultural repository that requires urgent study and conservation.

Durkheim's (2017) structural functionalism provides a theoretical lens to understand the Eskaya tribe as a social system composed of interdependent elements. Each component of their culture, from language to rituals, performs specific functions that sustain their society. This perspective is crucial for identifying the sociocultural characteristics of the Eskaya tribe and understanding the implications of external influences on

their traditional ways of life.

Sicat and David (2016) highlight the global significance of indigenous peoples, who number approximately 370 million worldwide and represent a wealth of cultural diversity. In Asia alone, indigenous groups account for 70% of this population. The Eskaya tribe, as part of this global tapestry, contributes to the cultural richness of the Philippines. However, like many indigenous groups, they face challenges in maintaining their distinct identity amidst globalization. This study aims to document their unique sociocultural practices, contributing to broader efforts to protect and promote indigenous heritage.

Ethnomathematics connects cultural practices with mathematical concepts, offering an alternative perspective on traditional education. By exploring the Eskaya tribe's practices, this research seeks to uncover mathematical concepts embedded in their culture, providing insights for curriculum development. Understanding these practices not only enriches mathematics education but also fosters respect for indigenous cultures among students and educators.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, with a specific focus on ethnography, to comprehensively examine the sociocultural context of the Eskaya tribe. Ethnography, rooted in cultural anthropology, allowed the researcher to immerse themselves within the Eskaya community, offering an in-depth understanding of their values, beliefs, and practices. This immersion enabled the researcher to capture the nuances of the tribe's unique way of life, including political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal aspects. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized, with emphasis on primary data gathered through field interviews, participant observations, surveys, and focus group discussions, supported by secondary data validated through ethnographic fieldwork.

The PESTEL framework was employed as a key analytical tool to analyze the data, providing a systematic evaluation of the

external environment affecting the Eskaya tribe. Originating from strategic planning, PESTEL allowed the researcher to critically examine factors such as governance structures (political), resource-based livelihoods (economic), social relationships and cultural norms (social), adoption of modern technologies (technological), interactions with the natural environment (environmental), and legal protections for Indigenous rights (legal). This comprehensive analysis contextualized the tribe's sociocultural practices within broader external influences, enriching the ethnographic findings.

Additionally, the Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM) coding system was utilized to organize and interpret the ethnographic data systematically. This coding approach categorized key aspects of social life, including history, demography, and ethnomathematical practices, facilitating a deeper understanding of the Eskaya tribe's cultural systems. The researcher's engagement in the daily activities of the community, including attending celebrations, participating in rituals, and observing educational practices, ensured the authenticity of the findings. These integrated methodologies provided a culturally respectful and holistic exploration of the Eskaya tribe, yielding insights into both the internal and external dimensions of their cultural identity.

The study was conducted in Taytay, Duero, Bohol, one of the settlements of the Eskaya tribe, an indigenous group primarily residing in the hinterlands of Duero, Guindulman, Pilar, and Sierra Bullones in Bohol's southeastern interior. The first settlement, established in the early 20th century by Mariano Datahan, was located in Biabas, Guindulman. A second settlement was founded in 1951 in Taytay under the guidance of Fabian Baja, following Datahan's instructions. Over time, the Eskaya tribe expanded to nearby areas, including Canta-ub, Lundag, Tambongan, Cadapdapan, and Fatimah. Taytay served as the focal site for this research due to its historical and cultural significance.

The respondents included five "totoban" teachers, five "estowas" students, and five parents ("sila/nima"), selected

through purposive sampling. The researcher employed various methods, including formal and informal interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions, to gather rich, contextual data. Immersion in the daily lives of the Eskaya people, eating, attending their Sunday Masses, participating in annual celebrations, and even staying overnight ensured a nuanced understanding of their sociocultural practices. Data collection tools, such as notebooks, video recorders, and other recording devices, were used with prior consent to uphold ethical standards. Ethical principles were strictly maintained throughout the study, including respect for cultural practices, ensuring anonymity, and protecting the dignity and well-being of all participants. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from relevant stakeholders, including the Eskaya chieftain, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and the Department of Education (DepEd).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results and discussion describe the sociocultural practices of the *Eskaya* tribe through a PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal) analysis. The political system of the Eskaya tribe includes their ancestral domain, population, policies, and the structures of tribal leadership. The tribe has a population of 10,070 people residing in 18 barangays in Bohol, with 2,104 households in four barangays of the ancestral domain. In Taytay, Duero, all 388 males and 338 females belong to the Eskaya tribe. The Tribal Council is the most important institution. However, it shares jurisdiction with the Barangay Council, leading to defined roles to avoid overlap.

Each barangay has a Tribal Council led by a Chieftain, chosen by the current Chieftain based on birthright. The tribe is divided into 12 groups called "HUNGOS," each electing a leader either by appointment or vote. The Chieftain, with the Tribal Council, administers cultural affairs, including the development and preservation of traditions. The Chieftain also resolves disputes; if unable, the Barangay Captain assists. The tribe

follows customary laws to maintain peace, order, and justice, which need codification to support the better implementation of state policies. Key regulations include prohibitions against gambling, drunkenness, indecent behavior, and stealing.

Additionally, there are rules against idleness, speaking indecently, excessive behavior, and disrespect. Community conduct emphasizes respect for elders, parents, and leaders, and adherence to these regulations ensures harmony. Religious observance is crucial, with Sundays designated for rest and church activities. Women's attire is regulated, and there are specific rules about children's behavior, including prohibiting unproductive games. Members of the community are expected to follow the Constitution and the tribe's commandments and to honor local traditions over foreign customs. The tribe's governance system is deeply tied to its traditional customs. Still, it requires formal codification for better alignment with state policies.

Figure 1

The Eskaya Tribal Councilors



Economic Aspects of the Eskaya tribe rely on both agricultural and cultural resources for economic sustainability. Known for organic farming, they produce various crops like strawberries, vegetables, and flowers, contributing to tourism

through their Eskaya Museum and local crafts. Their agricultural products, including strawberries, *sayote*, and *yakon*, are sold at competitive prices, offering income opportunities for the tribe. Additionally, the tribe's cultural identity, reflected in their unique language, numerals, and alphabet, is a source of pride and economic opportunity through educational initiatives like their alphabet being incorporated into local school curricula.

The social aspect of the tribe is heavily influenced by its connection to nature and cultural traditions. Key practices such as the Panghingilin Ritual (driving away bad spirits before tree cutting) and wildlife hunting reflect their sustainable approach to resource use. The tribe celebrates both national Filipino holidays and their unique holidays, such as Eskaya Day, which fosters unity and pride. Major festivals include Fiesta and Eskaya Day, where they showcase their cultural heritage. Education is a cornerstone of their society, ensuring that the tribe's culture and history are passed down through generations, supported by their written history and preservation efforts.

Figure 2
The Eskaya Alphabet



Culturally, the tribe has its alphabet, numerals, and unique names for days and months. Their alphabet, based on human body figures, is now part of the elementary curriculum, ensuring

the preservation of their language and culture. Culturally, the Eskaya tribe maintains its indigenous system of alphabets, numerals, and names for days and months. The days of the week are named as follows: Leni (Monday), Mimate (Tuesday), Mibor (Wednesday), Hubir (Thursday), Bini (Friday), Ssnubi (Saturday), and Llongo (Sunday). The months are named Emi-o (January), Hebi-on (February), Maso (March), Kabir (April), Ma-o (May), Hubi (June), Hubi-on (July), Tatu-o (August), Sitibi (September), Oktubi (October), Nobi (November), and Dibi (December). Eskaya numeration system as seen in Table 1:

Table 1
The Eskaya Numeration System

Hindu Arabic Numerals	Counting in Eskaya Dialect	Eskaya symbol	Hindu Arabic Numerals	Counting in Eskaya Dialect	Eskaya symbol
1	Oy	୧	6	Nom	୦୭
2	Tre	୨	7	Pin	୧୫
3	Coy	୩	8	Wal	୨୩
4	Pan	୪	9	Sem	୩୧
5	Sing	୫	10	Pon	୪୦

The Eskaya alphabet, consisting of 46 letters based on the figures of the human body, is integral to the tribe's cultural identity, as seen in Figure 1. This alphabet, along with their dialect, has been officially incorporated into the elementary school curriculum, sanctioned by the Department of Education (DepEd), to help preserve and sustain their cultural heritage.

The technological aspects of the *Eskaya* tribe maintain traditional farming practices; they have gradually integrated some modern technology. However, they still rely on manual tools and farming techniques such as plows, yokes, and basic gardening implements. Transportation is modernized with motorcycles and communal vehicles. Still, the tribe continues to maintain its traditional agricultural practices, which are rain-dependent. The adoption of technology is slow, with the tribe opting for a balance between preserving their ancestral practices and utilizing modern tools when necessary.

Moreover, the tribe's environmental aspect is their

ancestral land in Duero, Bohol, which offers fertile soil and a climate conducive to agriculture. Their farming practices prioritize sustainability, using natural resources responsibly. The tribe is known for growing various vegetables, flowers, and strawberries, and they rely on the cooler climate of their region for certain crops, like strawberries, which they uniquely cultivate in Bohol. Environmental stewardship is crucial to their way of life, with traditions like sustainable rattan harvesting and controlled wildlife hunting ensuring that their natural surroundings remain intact for future generations.

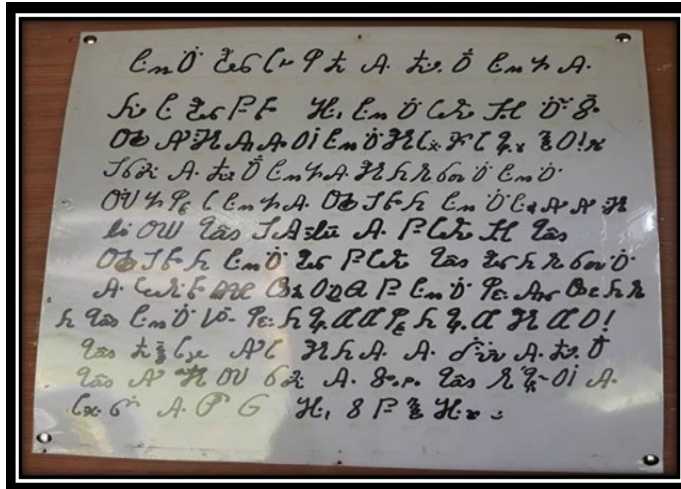
The Legal Aspects of the tribe is when they were recognized as an indigenous group under Republic Act No. 8371, also known as "The Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997". The tribe received official recognition in 1996 with the awarding of a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) by the President. CADC No. R7-CADC-14 encompasses 3,173 hectares of land in several areas, including Tatay (Duero), Biabas (Guindulman), Lundag (Pilar), Canta-ub (Sierra-Bullones), and Cadapdapan (Candijay). The researcher focused on Tatay, Duero, where 1,537 square meters of land were granted. The community has a population of 633, consisting of 127 households and 143 families, with 333 males and 300 females. Legal recognition has empowered the tribe, though there are still challenges in codifying and formalizing their traditional laws to align more closely with national regulations.

The *Eskaya* tribe's vision is to promote love for their community, preserve their language, and cultivate unity and peace. Their mission focuses on safeguarding the tribe's rights, protecting their land, and preserving their traditions against exploitative forces. The tribe's goal is to cultivate virtues such as respect for God, helpfulness to others, environmental care, and patriotism, as reflected in their motto: "*Mahadlokon sa Ginoo, Matinabangon sa Kauban, Ma-ampingon sa Kinaiyahan, ug Mahigugma-on sa Nasud.*" The history of the *Eskaya* tribe is preserved through "old books" passed down from generation to generation. These books contain legends, some considered myths by historians, but they offer valuable insights into the tribe's origins. One story recounts their arrival in Bohol from Sumatra, where their first leader, Dangko, had twelve children

who settled near Antequera before moving east. According to the tribe's oral history, the Eskaya first settled in Talibon before relocating to Loon and later to the mountainous barangays of Campatud and Cansubayon. After some time, the tribe established a settlement in the lowlands of Antequera, in an area called Panas, where they lived from 600 A.D. to 1600 A.D. during the Spanish regime. They eventually established Barangay Viga as their capital, stretching to the riverside valleys beyond the current Abatan Bridge.

Figure 3

Eskaya Tribe's Vision Statement



The tribe's most legendary leader, Haring Lomod (Tamblot), was both a datu and high priest, with authority comparable to that of the present-day Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. His reign began in the early 1600s, and he was the first Boholano to lead a revolt against the Spanish conquistadors in 1621. The conflict was sparked by the Spanish taking a silver church bell, known locally as "Lingganayng Ugis." Further documentation of *Eskaya's* history includes genealogies and letters, such as one written by Mariano Datahan, a key figure in the settlement, to President Manuel Quezon in 1937. The Eskaya settlement at Taytay, Duero, was founded by Fabian Baja in 1951 under Datahan's guidance. Early settlers accessed the area by walking atop a mountain, which led to the name

"Taytay," meaning "trail" or "pathway." This area, which lies on the border of Duero, Guindulman, Pilar, and Sierra Bullones, was once a densely forested region. This analysis provides a comprehensive view of the Eskaya tribe's sociocultural dynamics and governance structures while highlighting their strong connection to tradition and the environment. The tribe's ongoing efforts to balance modernization with cultural preservation and environmental stewardship reflect a resilient and sustainable community.

CONCLUSION

The ethnographic study and PESTEL analysis of the Eskaya tribe provide a comprehensive understanding of the tribe's sociocultural practices and the importance of preserving and enhancing these traditions. The Eskaya tribe's way of life, rooted in agriculture, community rituals, and strong cultural identity, highlights the deep connection between the people and their environment. The tribe's unique language, mathematical numeration, and writing system are remarkable cultural treasures that need to be safeguarded for future generations.

The study implies that education, policy, and research are crucial in the development and preservation of the Eskaya tribe's sociocultural characteristics. Education plays a pivotal role in enabling the tribe members to understand and appreciate their cultural heritage, as well as their role in preserving it. Initiatives like the Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program and the enhancement of the Eskaya script within the Department of Education's curriculum can significantly contribute to the sustainability of their language and traditions. Policy, especially regarding the protection of the tribe's ancestral domain and natural resources, is vital. While social change is inevitable, it should be approached thoughtfully to ensure that it does not erode *Eskaya's* cultural identity and environmental stewardship. Thorough research and a deeper understanding of the tribe's culture and needs are essential before implementing changes, ensuring that the Eskaya people continue to thrive while preserving their heritage.

In conclusion, the Eskaya tribe's cultural practices and way of life are invaluable and must be protected from external threats. Educating future generations and implementing supportive policies will help preserve these traditions, ensuring that the Eskaya tribe remains a strong, self-sustaining community deeply rooted in its history while adapting to the changing world.

RECOMMENDATION

This research is an avenue to preserve and strengthen the Eskaya tribe's cultural heritage; it is essential to enhance culturally responsive education, implement stronger legal protections, and promote sustainable livelihood programs. Integrating the Eskaya language and script into formal education, training educators, and establishing community learning centers will ensure the transmission of traditional knowledge. Policy measures must safeguard ancestral lands and involve the Eskaya people in decision-making processes. Sustainable eco-tourism and agriculture initiatives can provide economic opportunities while protecting cultural traditions. Additionally, continuous research, documentation, and intergenerational dialogues will reinforce cultural identity and community empowerment. These efforts will help the Eskaya tribe thrive while preserving their unique heritage for future generations.

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“Daga mi kataguan mi”: Discoursing Laudato Si’ Toward a More Meaningful Indigenous Theology of Land in the Cordilleras

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ABSTRACT

There have been several instances in the Philippines where the government, sometimes in collaboration with private entities, has taken advantage of Indigenous lands for development projects. These situations often involve conflicts between the need for national development and the protection of Indigenous rights. These situations highlight the ongoing struggle between the government's development agenda and the need to protect the rights and lands of Indigenous Peoples in the Cordillera and other parts of the Philippines. While development is necessary, it should be balanced with respect for Indigenous cultures, rights, and the environment. With these pressing problems, this study is an attempt to raise the level of discussion on the imperative of restoring the Cordilleran land theology and to propose some general suggestions on how to shape a more relevant and meaningful Indigenous land theology through Laudato Si'. Laudato Si' claims a necessity to show particular concern for Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their lands are proposed. For them, land is not just a physical space or economic resource but a vital part of their cultural identity, livelihood, and way of life. Losing their land would mean losing a significant part of their existence.

Keywords: Indigenous Peoples, theology of the land, Cordillera, Laudato Si'

INTRODUCTION

The issue of land is at the heart of the conflicts between the government and the Indigenous people. Land is immensely important to both sides. For the Indigenous Peoples (IPs), land is intimately connected to almost all parts of their lives—their livelihood, culture, home, and identity.³ Losing it means taking most of what they have. It is no secret, however, that the lands of the IPs are very rich in natural resources, and there is great potential for hydroelectric development projects.⁴ Developing these rich lands would eventually lead the government into butting heads with the IPs. Though development does not always mean the loss of land or cultural identity for Indigenous communities, failure of the government to explore alternative development avenues that are inclusive, sustainable, and culturally appropriate can deter the protection of the rights and well-being of IPs. Development should be a partnership that respects the unique contributions and needs of Indigenous communities, ensuring that they benefit from and are not harmed by the process.

The struggle of upland ethnic minorities for the recognition of their ancestral land rights reached a plateau with the Rio Summit of 1992, with an explicit agreement among participating countries that ethnic minorities play a crucial role in the conservation of the environment.⁵ Since then, the literature has been replete with studies exploring various aspects of environmental development, including the ethical and spiritual dimensions of land management. While a few pioneering social scientists have pointed out resource management as an area of spiritual and theological discourse, no study in this area has been conducted in the Cordillera region. *Laudato Si'*⁶ asserts that particular concern must be shown for Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their lands are proposed.⁷ For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they care for it best. This study attempts to raise the level of discussion on the imperative of restoring the theology of land in the Cordilleran region. It proposes some general suggestions on how to shape a more

relevant and meaningful Indigenous land theology through *Laudato Si’*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1.1. The Land and the Cordillerans

Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) is an administrative region in the Philippines situated within the island of Luzon. The only landlocked region in the country is bordered by the Ilocos Region in the west and southwest and by the Cagayan Valley in the north, east, and southeast. The region comprises six provinces: Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, and Mountain Province. The regional center is a highly urbanized city of Baguio. The region, officially created on July 15, 1987, covers most of the Cordillera Central mountains of Luzon and is home to numerous Indigenous Peoples collectively known as the Igorot. Indigenous Peoples believe that land was granted to them by Kabunian⁸ and entrusted to them to harness, cultivate, develop, take care of, sustain, and patronize. To them, private property is non-existent because they adhere to the value of collectivism. In fact, peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationship with nature define the people's role as stewards or guardians of the land. Since time immemorial, the IPs have been occupying the territory that they are presently in. Historical accounts show that even before the coming of the colonizers, the people were already in possession of the land. They have developed systems for exploiting the resources within the land. They built permanent settlements, constructed rice terraces, identified territories, and they were living peacefully. They have developed a culture that defines their actions and behaviors to survive.⁹

Each of the Indigenous groups in the Cordilleras claims to have ancient ties to the land claims that are enacted in both oral history and contemporary rituals. In Benguet, there are always ongoing issues with regard to ancestral domain among Christians and non-Christians, and according to local informants, the process of actually achieving a declared ancestral domain is extremely complicated. The concept of dwelling is well articulated in the Cordillera Indigenous people's cultural mentality of ancestral domain. Many Cordillerans conceive the world as a sacred garden into which God places human beings to look after on behalf of the

Creator.

The land explains the human person's intimate relationship with others and to the natural world. Our rootedness as human beings arises from our identity and purpose as being created to inhabit and care for God's physical creation. The notion of "land is life" is central to the Indigenous way of life. For the Cordillerans, like the ancient Israelites, land is granted by God. It is not just the physical space but a place in which they build and express their sense of self through their Indigenous knowledge and belief system. It is at the heart of their identity and belonging.

It is noted that, despite the so-called "modern," "scientific," and "progressive" learning methods, there are still epistemological and institutional barriers that hinder the recognition and integration of Indigenous knowledge and practices concerning natural resource stewardship. In the Indigenous worldview, land is a covenant. Theodore M. Ludwig (2006, 389) asserted that God created all things good; humans have the privilege and obligation to enjoy and enhance life. In Gen. 15:5, God makes a covenant with Abraham and tells him that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky. This very idea is expressed in Deut. 10:14- 22: "Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord your God, the earth with all that is in it, yet the Lord set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today."

1.2. Present Issues: Land Problems and Aspirations of the Cordillerans

Due to the rapid expansion of the now commercialized region and the mega migrations of people across the country, Cordillera, especially Baguio City, currently houses a bigger and more diverse population of a mixture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples and migrants. Occupied in their homelands, the aboriginal peoples of the region remain marginalized. The following are the common forms of violations of the integral rights and self-determination of the IPs of the Cordillera:

1.2.1 Mining industries and operations

The Cordillera region is rich in mineral reserves such as gold, copper, silver, and zinc, as well as non-metallic minerals like sand,

gravel, and sulfur. It is home to the three longest-operating mining giants in the country, namely, Benguet Corporation (116 years), Lepanto Mining Corporation (83 years), and the Philex Mining Corporation (63 years). Therefore, the very rich and prosperous region has been subjected to development aggression and imposition of destructive socio-economic projects in the name of "national development" or "national interest," such as the large-scale mining operations mentioned. Today, one-third of Cordillera's land area of more than 1.8 million hectares is covered by mining operations, mining permits, and applications.

With these mining operations, several compromises needed to be made, including sacrificing watersheds, animal reserves, wood and trees, plantations, etc. In the areas of Mountain Province, watersheds are especially threatened by communal watershed forests, which serve as the water sources of main rivers. Cordillera was, in fact, dubbed as the "Watershed Cradle of North Luzon." Sagada, Abra, and some of the nearby municipalities of Cordillera are water sources of the main rivers flowing down to the lower provinces. Water from Sagada, for example, flows down to the Chico River toward Kalinga and irrigation channels in Cagayan. They also nourish thousands of hectares of rice fields in the provinces of Abra, Ilocos, and Quirino.

1.2.2. Dams

Cordillera is also a major energy producer through its mega dams, providing about seventy percent of Luzon's energy needs. Thus, the region is targeted not only for mining applications but also for large dam infrastructures. Two of the oldest dams have already been built in Benguet; namely, the Ambuklao dam in Bokod, built in 1956, and the Binga dam in Itogon, which opened in 1960.

According to Allad-iw, the people affected by the construction of these mega-dams remain displaced.¹⁰ Despite government promises of compensation and jobs, these have been proven to be mere deception and lies to quell opposition. In addition, local people were forced to relocate to unfamiliar areas like Palawan and Nueva Ecija, which were already inhabited, disease-ridden, and without access to electricity. These issues remain unsolved. Despite promises of substantial payments for the taken lands, displaced families have received no substantial amount to date.¹¹ Moreover,

plans are still pending for more hydropower projects in the region. The question remains: Who benefits from these projects? Is it for the people of the Cordillera or the greater population, or is it primarily for corporate interests?

1.2.3. Land grabbing

Over the years, the Cordillerans, among other IPs, have faced numerous violations of their land systems. Due to the region's rich natural resources, people's rights to collective ownership, priority use, and management over ancestral lands and resources have been consistently denied and unrecognized. Many foreign and locally funded projects have infiltrated these lands, leading to the displacement of countless inhabitants. To date, many of these displaced individuals have not received proper compensation.

The origins of these violations against IPs can be traced back to the arrival of various foreign colonizers. These colonizers imposed their foreign policies and laws, including land systems. The Regalian Doctrine, for instance, arrogantly asserted that the lands, due to colonization, would be owned by the Spanish Crown. This doctrine became the foundation of the nation's land laws.

Even after the American regime replaced Spanish rule, the Regalian Doctrine remained in place, with only the owner changing from Spain to America. To further strengthen colonial control over the island's resources, the Public Land Act was enacted in 1902, granting the American government the authority to confiscate all public lands. This act subjected all lands to the Torrens system, a land title registration process, leading to the commodification of land resources. The Philippine Commission Act No. 178 of 1903 followed, declaring all unregistered lands as part of the public domain and reserving the State's right to classify and exploit them. Two years later, the Mining Law of 1905 was enacted, granting Americans the right to acquire public land for mining purposes and revealing their intention to extract resources from Indigenous territories.

1.2.4. Commercialization

Environment and development are inextricably linked. After all, humans are tasked with cultivating and developing the land, and advancements in science, technology, and infrastructure are helping these efforts. However, the misuse of science and

technology, coupled with excessive infrastructural development, can lead to land degradation. Commercialization often comes at a significant cost to land and other environmental resources. Beyond the loss of subsurface resources, biodiversity also suffers.

Due to the barrage of Western legal influences, the traditional land tenure systems have ceased drastically, leading to the commercialization of land and its products. Land and wood have become commodities that could be easily bought and sold as people have been increasingly drawn into money traps. Even previously untouchable communal and sacred lands have been slowly privatized by specific clans or individuals. Once privatized, these lands often become targets for development, with buildings being constructed to maximize profits.¹²

1.3. Cordilleran vision of the land

According to the Cordilleran worldview, land represents identity, being, and life. It is not merely a plot that can be owned, titled, and exploited at will. As a Cordilleran saying goes, "Only the tribe can 'own' the land because all its members are free to occupy and till any piece of land." A person who insists on individual ownership of the land through a title is akin to someone claiming exclusive ownership of a piece of the sky. Unlike the biblical narrative of Israel, land is not a commodity. The Bible says in Leviticus 25 that the land is an inheritance for the Israelites, and it was core to God's covenantal promises. God's people are not to abuse their inheritance but to treasure it. It cannot be bought and sold.

The identity of the IPs, rooted in their relation to the land, also defines their social structure at the family and community levels. This distinctive identity is the core of their vision, goals, purpose, and way of life. For the Cordillerans, land and territory are life and worship, a stark reality that outsiders could hardly understand. While the Cordilleran Indigenous community may lack the luxuries and amenities of technological society, they have maintained a cultic relationship and harmonious coexistence with humanity's only habitat. Practical theology can be seen in the Cordillerans' sense of absolute dependence on the land, which is a sacred inheritance from Kabunian (God), a paradigm of theistic holism. Belonging to the land, a Cordilleran is never autonomous from the reality of the sacred. Land, life, Kabunian, and the spirits of the *kaappoan*

(ancestors) are communing essences in the world of the Cordillerans.

1.3.1. Land as life

The struggle for land and ecological crises is an urgent issue that challenges our theological reflections, not just in the Philippines but worldwide. Aware of these crises and the worsening conditions of our ecology here, the people's choice to strive for ecological well-being and liberation is indubitably a positive "sign of the times" that theologians should scrutinize in the light of faith.¹³ It is significant to note that in the Philippine context, the magnitude of our ecological struggles originates largely from our rural grassroots, including our Indigenous poor peoples in the Cordilleras.

It is a conviction that oppressive relationships in the Philippines produce not only human poverty but also ecological crises. This implies that the oppression of the people leads further to the oppression of ecology and the environment. It results from the oppressive ideology of the modern paradigm of textual legalities that promotes human dominion over nature. "In other words, an anthropocentric liberation theology does not fully listen to the cry of the poor as it tends to be deaf to the groaning of the exploited earth."¹⁴

One cannot truly say that he/she is promoting the well-being of people with low incomes while neglecting their land and ecological well-being. The ongoing crises of the oppression of IPs cannot be addressed separately from the ecological crises. In fact, the oppression of the people stems from and is worsened by the exploitation of their ecological turfs. This means that addressing the oppression and poverty of IPs ultimately requires dealing primarily with ecological and environmental concerns. It goes without saying that the land of the people and their ecological welfare are directly correlated to their holistic well-being because the land contains the very essence of life itself. It is here that everything that supports life is found. Therefore, land is life.

For the Cordillerans, collectively known as Igorots ("mountain people"), "Land is Life" is a long-held belief that remains relevant today. They believe in the interconnectedness of their lives and the presence and richness of the land. Land is where

they obtain food, water, and shelter. It is the essential foundation of their way of life.

To claim a place is the birthright of every man. The lowly animals claim their place; how much more man? Man is born to live. *Apu Kabunian*, lord of us all, gave us life and placed us in this world to live human lives. And where shall we obtain life? From the land. To work the land is an obligation, not merely a right. In tilling the land, you possess it. And so land is a grace that must be nurtured. The land is sacred. The land is beloved. From its womb springs our Kalinga life.¹⁵

These are the very words of Macliing Dulag, a Cordilleran warrior chief from Kalinga province. They effectively summarize the worldview of IPs land in the region. Like IPs across the planet, the Cordillera people have equated land with life itself.

2.3.2 *Land as an Inheritance*

IPs, including the Cordillerans, have been the longest caretakers of the lands. Throughout history, they have developed their cultural systems, especially land systems rooted in collectivism, to support their existence. There is consensus among the Cordillera people that the land was created by a Creator (linked with other deities and spirits)¹⁶ and is, therefore, sacred. From the Creator, known as *Kabunian*, *Lumawig*, *Umay-ayong*, *Mahmongan*, or *Wigan*, the land was inherited by their ancestors. Thus, since time immemorial, generations of Indigenous Cordillerans have inherited, tilled, and sustained the land for life. With its divine origin, it is an inheritance and is sacred; it cannot be subjected to ownership, sale, purchase, or lease. "The Cordillerans have a widespread belief that the land was held usufruct and cannot be removed from the community's use." Based on their varied communal needs, they established a system of communal ownership.

During earlier times, the people of the Cordilleras all had a land to cultivate. They each owned a piece of the land and its resources, which were primarily acquired through inheritance. Inherited lands were highly valuable, especially residential lots, rice fields, and nearby gardens. Aside from inheritance, land could also be acquired through sale, compensation, or barter. Selling land was considered a last resort and was traditionally permitted only in times of extreme emergencies. Land could be used as compensation for damage inflicted on another member of the community, seemingly

as a peace offering.

2.3.3. *Land as identity*

Land provides not only food and shelter but also a place of belonging. Physical landmarks do not simply give a name to a particular geographical location; they also provide grounding and shape the character of their inhabitants. Identity is rooted in the culture and values formed in people's lives as they live together on a land they call home. Many IPs, like the Cordillerans' self-identity, are rooted in the values and meanings formed in their life systems in their homelands rather than just the land features.

Cordillerans are proud people, particularly in their identity as Igorots.¹⁷ Their diverse and beautiful cultures, societal, and political systems, which spring from and are further developed in their relationship with the land, provide them with that sense of pride. The lands not only provide food, water, and shelter but also shape the culture and ways of life of inhabitants, giving them an identified uniqueness and, therefore, an identity.

1.4. Learning the Lessons of *Laudato Si'* and the Cordilleran Indigenous Land Theology

The world faces increasingly daunting environmental challenges. Global warming has caused climate changes, disrupting natural cycles and weather patterns. Hurricanes are becoming stronger, while droughts are longer and more intense. Mountain glaciers worldwide have receded, raising sea levels and threatening to submerge low-lying islands. Greenhouse gases released by natural phenomena partly cause global warming. However, large quantities of these gases come from anthropogenic activities like the burning of fossil fuels. Changing rainfall patterns lead to local food shortages, health problems, and even armed disputes. Many water sources are threatened by faulty waste disposal, industrial pollutants, fertilizer run-off, and saltwater intrusion into underground aquifers, leading to unsafe drinking water and depletion of groundwater. Soil has been contaminated by excessive salts and hazardous chemicals. Erosion, exhaustion of nutrients, and trace elements have degraded soil quality, resulting in poor crop harvests. Deforestation and mining are among human activities that have adversely affected biodiversity.

Laudato Si' summarizes Pope Francis' challenge to seek sustainable and integral development to protect our common home. A new dialogue about the future of the planet is needed. While he acknowledges the efforts of individuals to address environmental degradation and social injustice, he also recognizes that more people must share this work, as these concerns affect us all. Through the challenges presented in *Laudato Si'*, this section attempts to reconstruct the new image of the Cordilleran land theology (response). In the following section, we present the themes of *Laudato Si'* as recommendations for inclusion in Cordilleran land theology.

1.4.1. Land as a sacred space

The land is sacred, and the people of the Cordilleras believe intently in the interconnectedness of nature and the spiritual world. Cordillerans perceive a reciprocal interconnectedness between the spiritual land and the earthly land, including the forests, rivers, mountains, plains, and humans as their stewards. This worldview compels the people to treat the land with utmost sanctity. In contrast, viewing the land as simply a mass of soil without any sacredness or spirituality attached to it makes it easier for people to take the land for granted (for commercialization, resource extraction, land grabbing, etc.).

Before taking any action, spiritual beings were consulted through rituals and sacrifices. Inhabited places were often off-limits, and people needed to ask for permission before trespassing to avoid disturbing any entity. In Mountain Province, this practice is called *Inayan/Paniyew*.¹⁸ Careful deliberations were necessary to avoid violating any taboos. Disturbing or violating the spirits was believed to invite misfortune for individuals or even the entire community. Essentially, these practices permeated the relationship between humans and the spiritual world, forming an interconnectedness not only with the land and spirits but also with the Supreme Creator.

Indigenous Peoples share a common vision, especially regarding land. "For those who come from a Judeo-Christian background, it might be helpful to view Aboriginal peoples as Old Testament people. Like them, they (Cordillerans or any aboriginals for that matter) come out of an oral tradition rooted in the Creator and

the creation." ¹⁹ Like any other central figure in the Old Testament, the IPs understand their own story and history about the sacredness of the earth and the promise of the land. They know the power of the Creator and the goodness of creation. They can see themselves as "the people" in their sense of being chosen.

Indigenous spirituality around the world centers on the notion of interconnectedness with all creation. The earth is their mother, and the animals are their brothers, sisters, and relatives. As co-creatures of creation, IPs, and animals are part of the interdependence and connectedness of all life. Furthermore, understanding the gift of creation as the fullness of life makes it difficult to express individual ownership in Indigenous spirituality. If all of creation (living and non-living) are interdependent, it follows that it is not possible to speak of ownership.²⁰ Life is understood as a gift, and it makes no sense to claim ownership of any part of creation. Leaders of IPs worldwide often describe the absurdity of laying claim over the skies, air, or land, as these cannot be tied to an individual's life. The land is their life. It is meant to be shared, and they know the Creator intends it for future generations.

Nurturing ecological spirituality among the Igorots of the Cordilleras is essential, given their deep connection to the land and natural environment. The Igorots, with their rich cultural heritage and traditional practices, already embody many principles of ecological spirituality. However, formalizing and enhancing these practices could promote more sustainable living and environmental stewardship. In the daily life of IPs, the belief in the Great Spirit and other spirits translates into respect and care for Mother Nature, which is the foundation of ecological spirituality.

Indigenous Peoples view themselves as integral parts of nature and believe in living in productive harmony with it. Unlike the prevailing worldviews of the capitalists and socialists, the IPs do not view nature as something to be dominated. They live on the land. The land is viewed as not as a resource to be exploited for profit but the source of their group's existence, the thought that one is a mere part of nature when taken seriously can be a very humbling experience.

For Indigenous Peoples, the emphasis is not on human power over fish, birds, and animals for self-serving purposes but on the im-

age and likeness of God. This means that God has created humans as stewards of His creation: "I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals." Diarmuid O'Murchu lamented this reality, saying: "From a religious perspective, the aliveness of the nonhuman world (animals, etc.) is often perceived as a secondary life form, existing for the use and benefit of humans."²¹ This form of reductionism is dangerously anthropocentric, undermining not merely the spiritual empowerment of all life but also relegating humans to a cosmic and planetary superiority that seems to be at the roots of many of the major problems confronting humanity today.

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This kind of spirituality, which is the belief in the Great Spirit, is akin to Christianity's Pneumatology. Quoting German theologian Jurgen Moltmann, O'Murchu observed:

God and the Holy Spirit...is in all created beings...if we understand the Creation, his creation, and the goal of that creation in a Trinitarian sense, then the Creator, through this Spirit, dwells in his creation as a whole. Every individual is created by virtue of his Spirit holding them together and keeping them in life. The inner secret of creation is this indwelling of God.²³

For Indigenous Peoples, being present in all creation is not just an idea but a way of life. Their spirituality is a lived experience, not something confined to institutions. This can be understood as incarnational spirituality. Incarnational spirituality refers to the human spirit being situated and rooted within the human flesh. Through this orientation, we shift our understanding of spirituality from something institutionalized to something embodied, from being associated with an institutional way of living to being rooted in our common humanity.²⁴

The value of Indigenous spirituality is its emphasis on

wholeness.²⁵ Authentic spirituality is rooted in wholeness and integrity. Everything is considered in a full circle. It's a worldview that does not separate or compartmentalize. There is an awareness that we are all part of all life and that everything is part of a cosmic order. Living faithfully with creation means living in the rhythm and natural flow of this ordered cosmos.

1.4.2 *Land as a gift and a responsibility*

Preserving ecology and, essentially, all of creation is a responsibility. Due to human self-interest, nature, originally good, "becomes hidden and unseen." However, it is through human selflessness that nature can be saved and preserved for future generations. In the Jewish tradition, cosmic harmony was first established at creation, when the cosmic elements were fixed and bound to maintain order. But this order was breached and threatened by other forces and beings that were hostile to God and humankind. These include the myth of the great flood and its subsequent re-creation.²⁶

Pope Francis recognizes the role of Indigenous cultural communities in practicing a sound cultural ecology based on the notion that land is of divine origin and is sacred. He stated:

In this sense, it is essential to show special care for Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homeland to make room for agricultural or mining projects that are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture.²⁷

A new vision of life must be founded on the conviction that humans are embedded in nature, and nature is also embedded in human beings. Dianne Bergant argued, "We are truly children of the universe, made of the same stuff as are the mountains and the rain, the sand and the stars. We are governed by the laws of life and growth and death, as are the birds, fish, and grass of the fields. We

thrive in the warmth of and through the agency of the sun as does every other living thing." ²⁸

1.4.3. *Land as a common home*

Indigenous Peoples are often neglected and even deprived of their rights as original settlers and caretakers of their lands. They are being stripped of their titles as legitimate owners/residents of their traditional lands, their common home. With their land rights taken away, their cultural, economic, societal, and land tenure systems are also being deprived. Since their means of living are being expropriated, they are essentially deprived of their right to live. For these reasons, Indigenous communities appeal to both local/domestic and international laws for land protection.²⁹

In the book of Genesis, God made the land appear from the waters and put in it many living creatures as well. This reminds us of the sacrament of baptism, in which new life comes after being baptized with water. God commanded, "Let the water below the sky come together in one place so that the land will appear,"— and it was done. He named the land "Earth," and the water that had come together, he named it "Sea." ³⁰ And God was pleased with what he saw. Then he commanded, "Let the earth produce all kinds of plants, those that bear grain and those that bear fruit"—and it was done... Then God commanded, "Let the water be filled with many kinds of living beings, and let the air be filled with birds." Then God commanded, "Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life: domestic and wild, large and small"—and it was done. So, God made them all, and he was pleased with what he saw.³¹

Land is life! The land is sacred! That is the undeniable creed of the IPs. Land is life, and land is sacred—it is a worldview that threads through their spiritual rituals and worships and their worldviews. The ethnicity of IPs is the most significant aspect of their claim to land and life. Their life has a vital link to their land. Their world consciousness and the continuity of their way of life are firmly rooted in their birthplace. Their land of origin is not only the source of their sustenance but also their identity and culture. Their ancestral land is the repository of their knowledge and worldviews. Their clear awareness of the environment and their keen respect for its natural processes constitute an intellectual and spiritual identity for them.

Ancestral land is defined by law as follows:

Land occupied, possessed, and utilized by individuals, families, and clans who are members of the ICCs/IPs since time immemorial, by themselves or through their predecessors-in-interest, under claims of individual or traditional group ownership, continuously, to the present except when interrupted by war, force majeure or displacement by force, deceit, stealth, or as a consequence of government projects and other voluntary dealings entered into by government and private individuals/corporations, including, but not limited to, residential lots, rice terraces or paddies, private forests, swidden farms and tree lots.³²

Rex Reyes, secretary general of the NCCP (National Council of Churches in the Philippines), stated in an interview: "It is foolishness to say we own the land. The land owns us!" Indigenous Peoples around the world have affirmed this statement time and again in defense of the land from wanton abuse. This springs from a profound understanding that the Earth's resources are to be shared for the sustenance of all life, not exploited to satisfy the greed of the few. Such Indigenous perspectives resonate with the Christian understanding of responsible stewardship. Responsible stewardship and Indigenous spirituality uphold the reverence for life, the good interrelationship that should define a community and sensitivity to the well-being of future generations. This practical knowledge and foresight explain why IPs defend the land. Ironically, the active articulation of these life-affirming and life-sustaining principles has become the reasons for their marginalization and the suffering imposed on them.

Apo Pangat Makliing Dulag of Kalinga articulated clearly that land is sacred as an element of Indigenous spirituality when he said:

You ask if we own the land. . . How can you own that which will outlive you? Only the race owns the land because only the race lives forever. To claim a piece of land is the birthright of every man. The lowly animals claim their place; how much more man? Man is born to live. Apu Kabunian, lord of us all, gave us life and placed us in the world to live human lives. And where shall we obtain life? From the land. To work (the land) is an obligation, not merely a right. In tilling the land, you possess it. And so land is a grace that

must be nurtured. To enrich it and make it fructify is the eternal exhortation of Apu Kabunian to all his children. Land is sacred. Land is beloved. From its womb springs ...life.³³

CONCLUSION

Dwelling should be an expression of their cultural integrity. As beautifully expressed, ancestral land and domain are at the heart of Indigenous identity, longing, and belonging. The notion of dwelling posits that an essential characteristic of authenticity is "homeliness," or being oneself in one's environment. Home is where your heart is. It is invested with meaning and identity.

As human beings, our relationship with the natural world is, by definition, a social one. How we perceive and use nature is shaped by how society is organized and how we, as members of that society, view nature's value. In other words, our relationship with nature is socially constructed and patterned. While earlier approaches to the study of human ecology attest to the character of this relationship, there is a need to see religious and spiritual factors as a strong undercurrent to the relationship between users and resources. In the latter, the user's linkage with the broader processes, including the state and its apparatuses, structures the physical and social environment and complicates the relationship between society and nature.

The struggle for ancestral land, as a discourse, pertains not just to legal and political strategies about land ownership but also to spiritual processes whereby understandings, interpretations, and meanings of the land are constituted and contested through social practices such as ritual and belief. The official view of how ancestral lands should be addressed may deviate from the actual situation, resulting in a gap between "what should be" and "what actually happened." This gap can also be a venue for the negotiation of power and meaning among the stakeholders.

The concept of an Indigenous land theology involves an interconnected system of Indigenous knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and practices about land and ecology. This can be contrasted with Judeo-Christian environmental theology. Approaching these two spiritualities as a dialogue could enrich both perspectives. Such a

dialogue may inspire and illuminate the struggles of Indigenous Peoples for their ancestral lands, creating a communicative theological action that is empowering and liberating.³⁴

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Lived Experiences of Hospitalized Persons with Visual Disability

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ABSTRACT

Multiple studies indicate that many people worldwide face significant disabilities, often requiring specialized healthcare. However, little is known about the hospital experiences of Filipinos with visual disabilities. The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of hospitalized individuals with visual disabilities, addressing the challenges experienced by hospitalized persons with visual disabilities in the areas of accessibility and their adaptation to the hospital. Descriptive phenomenology was employed from 10 participants in Baguio City, La Trinidad, and Tuba, Benguet, Philippines, from January to May 2024, selected using purposive and referral sampling. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and data were analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step method. Three major themes with 12 sub-themes emerged from the participants' narratives, mainly: 1) Traveling through unfamiliar paths, (2) Connecting with carers, and (3) Adapting to healing. Hospitalized individuals with visual disabilities face challenges like inaccessible pathways, lack of aids, and service delays. Their treatment varies, with positive interactions involving care and prompt attention and negative ones involving neglect, long waits, and inappropriate behavior. The study revealed that hospitalized individuals with visual disabilities encountered challenges such as stereotypes, facility barriers, and admission delays

alongside positive experiences. Despite these, they demonstrated resilience through coping strategies, and their experiences were significantly influenced by the type of hospital.

This study highlights systemic barriers faced by visually disabled patients, emphasizing the need for improved accessibility, inclusive healthcare policies, and humanistic practices. Findings advocate policy enforcement, structural adaptations, sensitivity training, and patient empowerment to ensure equitable, inclusive care.

Keywords: Accessibility, barriers, healthcare, navigation, visual disability

INTRODUCTION

Globally, approximately 1.3 billion people experience significant disabilities, with sensory impairments, particularly visual disabilities, affecting 2.2 billion individuals (WHO, 2023). In the Philippines, visual disabilities affect an estimated 500,000 individuals (Robredo, 2018), while around 1.4 million households reported disabilities in 2010 (Institute for Labor Studies). Visual disability, characterized by reduced visual capacity that cannot be corrected through conventional means, significantly impacts daily life and healthcare access. Despite the existence of laws like the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Republic Act 7277, 1992) and initiatives such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Comprehensive Program for Persons with Disabilities, barriers persist for visually disabled individuals in accessing equitable and appropriate healthcare in the country.

The challenges faced by visually disabled individuals are not merely medical but also systemic and societal. Studies in high-income countries, such as those by Morse et al. (2019) and Binder-Olibrowska et al. (2022), emphasize the need for accessible hospital environments, including Braille signage, voice announcements, and well-designed pathways to prevent injuries. Furthermore, the psychosocial competencies of healthcare providers, such as communication skills, empathy, and disability awareness, are critical for fostering a patient-centered approach.

However, most of these studies are limited to high-income nations, leaving a gap in understanding how these issues manifest in low- and middle-income countries like the Philippines.

The current Philippine healthcare system, though supported by laws such as the Accessibility Law (Batas Pambansa Blg. 344, 1982) and RA 9442, lacks comprehensive implementation to address the unique needs of hospitalized persons with visual disabilities. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained medical personnel, financial constraints, and transportation challenges exacerbate the healthcare inequities experienced by this population (Pedron, 2018; Reyes et al., 2018). These barriers often result in poorer clinical outcomes and significant financial strain for hospitalized individuals with severe visual disabilities (Harris & Wright, 2021). Yet, research into their lived experiences remains scarce, particularly in the Philippine context.

This study seeks to bridge knowledge gaps and better understand how healthcare services in the Philippines meet the needs of visually disabled patients during hospitalization. By exploring the unique challenges faced by this population, the research aims to highlight gaps in current laws and healthcare practices, offering actionable recommendations for improving care quality. It seeks to raise awareness of the lived experiences of hospitalized individuals with visual disabilities and advocate for reforms that prioritize their dignity, rights, and well-being. The study will identify and critically analyze barriers to healthcare access for visually disabled individuals. It will provide insights into how existing laws, services, and hospital practices address their needs, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive healthcare system based on equity and accessibility for all.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study delves into the hospitalization experiences of individuals with visual impairments, emphasizing their unique challenges and coping mechanisms. Guided by descriptive phenomenology, the research sought to capture participants' lived experiences in real-world contexts, underscoring the

profound and diverse realities shaped by their social interactions, family dynamics, and socio-educational backgrounds. The study adhered to Streubert and Carpenter's (2007) qualitative research principles, incorporating in-depth, semi-structured interviews to foster open dialogue. Before data gathering, an endorsed proposal was submitted by the technical panel to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of SLU. A total of ten participants, aged 27–69 and residing in Baguio City, La Trinidad, and Benguet, were selected using purposive and snowball sampling. Inclusion criteria ensured relevance, with data collection ceasing upon saturation. Participants were interviewed in comfortable, distraction-free environments, such as homes, cafés, or workplaces. The interviews, lasting 30–60 minutes, explored their challenges with hospital accessibility, adaptation to structural designs, and coping strategies.

Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological process guided the meticulous transcription, coding, and thematic analysis of the data. Member-checking and iterative team discussions ensured accuracy, validity, and alignment with participant narratives. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement, bracketing, and transparent audit trails to establish trustworthiness. Dependability was achieved by fostering consistent collaboration among researchers and incorporating feedback from research panelists. Confirmability was maintained through reflexivity, peer debriefing, and member validation of findings. Transferability was enhanced by including rich participant quotations and non-verbal cues in the analysis. Ethical considerations were central to the research process. Informed consent was obtained through accessible means, including one-on-one discussions and thumbprint acknowledgments. The researchers addressed participants' vulnerability with empathy and ensured privacy, confidentiality, and equitable treatment. Participants were reimbursed for any costs incurred during the study to ensure fairness. Findings highlighted the participants' difficulties navigating hospital systems, the importance of support systems, and their resilience in coping with these challenges. The study's insights contribute to a deeper understanding of visually impaired individuals' healthcare experiences, providing a foundation for policymakers to develop inclusive healthcare guidelines. This

research underscores the value of amplifying marginalized voices, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring equitable access to healthcare services for all.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the study, in which ten people shared their rich experiences about the phenomenon under investigation. The information acquired led to the development of three major themes and twelve sub-themes, as shown in Figure 1.

MAIN THEME 1: TRAVELING THROUGH UNFAMILIAR PATHS

Traveling through unfamiliar paths refers to the difficulties that hospitalized persons with visual disabilities face in navigating the hospital's physical environment. These difficulties stem from various factors, such as inaccessibility of pathways, lack of visually assistive devices, and inability to adapt to new environments.

Subtheme 1.1. Movements limited by barriers

The subtheme captures the challenges visually impaired patients face in accessing hospital amenities like restrooms, nurses' stations, and wards. Factors such as distant facilities, unorganized layouts, obstacles, and limited space exacerbate these difficulties.

The participants' experiences reveal that inaccessible facilities and poor layout hinder hospital navigation, resulting in unmet physiological needs such as urination, shelter, and health care. Maslow's hierarchy of needs emphasizes that these basic needs must be met before higher-level needs can be addressed. Binder-Olibrowska et al. (2022) highlight that proximity and unobstructed pathways are essential for visually impaired patients to fulfill these fundamental needs.

Additionally, participants without caregivers present relied heavily on hospital staff for assistance. Guerreiro et al. (2019) and Morse et al. (2019) corroborate these findings, stating that

visually impaired individuals often depend on hospital staff to navigate inaccessible facilities and avoid potential injuries.



Figure 1. Themes and subthemes emerged from the lived experiences of hospitalized persons with visual disability

They also struggle with unfamiliar layouts, inaccessible features, and a lack of orientation cues like landmarks, tactile markings, or sounds. Consistency in layout and orientation skills, such as identifying signs or landmarks, is essential for independent navigation. Bahtiyar & Can (2021) emphasized this need, stating that obstacles and random layouts exacerbate the difficulties faced by blind individuals.

They also find it difficult to adapt to the hospital environment despite prior orientations provided by the staff. For instance, orange acknowledges that she needs assistance from the hospital staff to navigate the facilities.

ORANGE: "Pag talagang kung baguhan kami kahit ituro nila, mahirap din para sa amin parin yun. Kasi, simple, uhhh bago kami sa lugar na yun, hindi rin namin

kasi kaagad makabisado, kaya kailangan talaga namin na doon yung talagang mag-a-assist talaga..."

(When we're new to the place, even if they orient us, it's still difficult for us. Because we're new to that place, we don't immediately memorize it, so we really need someone to assist us there.)

Jeamwatthanachai et al. (2018) support this, noting that visually impaired individuals often lack confidence in navigating new environments due to limited reliance on sighted guides and unfamiliarity with typical landmarks.

The challenges of navigating inaccessible hospital facilities highlight an urgent need for improvement. Long distances, disorganized layouts, and obstacles lead to unmet needs, dependency on staff, and difficulty adapting to environments. According to Binder-Olibrowska et al. (2022), accessibility is vital to ensure patient safety, autonomy, and dignity. Addressing these barriers fosters inclusivity, independence, and equal access to healthcare for visually impaired patients.

Subtheme 1.2. Walking paths void of aids

Walking paths void of aids highlight the absence of assistive devices or features intended to help visually disabled individuals navigate safely and independently around the hospital environment. A visually assistive device is any tool, equipment, software, or product system that helps individuals maintain or enhance their functional abilities. (Braille Institute Staff, 2020). These are devices that aid in mobility, navigation, and reading (Blind/Visual Impairment: Common Assistive Technologies, 2023). Visually assistive devices in hospitals include canes, hand railings, and braille displays.

Some participants expressed that they did not observe any visually assistive devices in the hospital, specifically along the pathways leading to the comfort rooms. The absence of handrails in the ward prevented them from independently navigating to the comfort room. These findings highlight a lack of visually assistive devices like handrails and signage in hospitals. Jafaar et al. (2023) emphasize that handrails are essential in public hospi-

tals for persons with disabilities, providing stability, preventing falls, and aiding navigation on slippery surfaces.

The lack of visually assistive devices in hospitals creates challenges for visually disabled individuals, limiting their ability to navigate safely. Handrails and signage are essential for accessibility, as they provide stability and direction. Addressing this gap is critical to promoting inclusivity and safety in hospital settings, allowing all patients to navigate independently and confidently.

MAIN THEME 2: CONNECTING WITH CARERS

Connecting with carers refers to the vital relationship between visually impaired individuals and their caregivers and healthcare professionals within the healthcare environment. A carer provides physical, emotional, and practical care and support to visually impaired patients, helping them navigate hospital settings, meet daily needs, and adapt to healthcare environments.

Subtheme 2.1. Caring nature that nurtures

The hospital staff's caring nature, including compassion, reliability, and support, greatly enhances the well-being of visually disabled patients. This tailored care, along with caregiver involvement, improves the hospital experience.

Fakoya et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of compassionate staff, supported by Bentum-Micah et al. (2020), who found empathy improves patient outcomes. Moudatsou et al. (2020) highlighted how a person-centered approach fosters empathy and acceptance in clinical settings. Participants valued effective communication and compassionate care, as polite, respectful communication fostered comfort and satisfaction. These findings stress the importance of empathy in improving healthcare outcomes.

Ravaghi et al. (2020) noted that proximity to nurses improves monitoring and emergency response, highlighting the role of facility layout in patient experience. This is reflected in some of the participants' experiences, in which they were initially placed near the nurses' station for easy communication.

Caregivers also play a crucial role in supporting visually impaired patients by assisting with navigation and daily needs. Mashiata et al. (2022) and Ejiakor et al. (2019) emphasized that caregiver assistance improves comfort, quality of life, and access to healthcare services. These findings show that caregivers enhance the hospital experience by supporting patients with tasks and ensuring comfort during hospitalization.

Subtheme 2.2. Prompt attention by health professionals

This subtheme highlights the importance of healthcare professionals' responsiveness to the specific needs of visually disabled patients, including timely medication, prompt assistance, and proactive health management. The quality of care directly affects the well-being and satisfaction of these patients, emphasizing the importance of attentive and responsive healthcare services.

Participants shared positive experiences with prompt assistance upon arrival at the hospital. Nurses quickly attended to them, explained the process, and ensured timely care, with some receiving immediate diagnostic tests. Tools like buzzers were provided to request help, and staff responded efficiently, reflecting the hospital's commitment to patient needs. These experiences align with findings by Cassarino et al. (2021), which highlight that early healthcare intervention can reduce hospital stays.

The participants also highlighted the frequent and regular visits they received from the nurses and doctors. This experience shows that regular and attentive healthcare can significantly impact patient satisfaction and outcomes, aligning with the principles outlined in the Donabedian Model of Healthcare Quality. The level of regular care not only provided necessary medical attention but also offered reassurance during a critical time.

The finding suggests that consistent and proactive healthcare practices contribute significantly to the overall well-being and reassurance of visually disabled individuals during hospitalization. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of healthcare providers' responsiveness and availability in meeting

the unique healthcare needs of visually disabled patients, ultimately enhancing the quality of care provided.

Subtheme 2.3 Inappropriate behavior and communication style

Inappropriate behavior and communication styles refer to the hospital staff's actions or speech that convey unclear engagement, unprofessionalism, disinterest, or lack of respect, which hinder patients' participation in care plans, weaken their dignity, and impede their ability to express their feelings and concerns.

Patients with visual disabilities experienced stress, discomfort, and aggravated medical conditions due to perceived neglect from hospital staff, resulting from poor communication and medical attention. Surachman and Almeida (2018) emphasized that neglect can trigger physiological and psychological stress responses, such as increased heart rate and anxiety, which can jeopardize health and well-being. It also impacts their safety needs, which are crucial for overall well-being and align with Maslow's second tier of needs (McKay, 2021). Unmet safety needs can heighten anxiety and frustration, negatively affecting their health (Mcleod, 2024).

The participants also experienced indirect communication from hospital staff, which may have overlooked the capabilities and intelligence of visually disabled individuals, creating a barrier to direct engagement and empowerment. A study revealed that healthcare professionals often neglect the needs of visually disabled individuals due to indirect communication, frequently focusing on companions or caregivers (Kwame & Petrucka, 2021).

Poor communication among healthcare professionals leads to miscommunication and dismissive attitudes, affecting patients' sense of safety, belonging, and trust, as per Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Studies by Olkin et al. (2019) and Jackson et al. (2019) show that these issues, along with ableist biases, delay diagnosis and create care inequities, resulting in subpar service. Inappropriate healthcare behavior towards visually impaired patients exacerbates stress and worsens medical conditions. Addressing these communication issues is essential for improving

health outcomes and meeting patients' needs. Healthcare systems must train staff to support visually impaired patients better, fostering a more inclusive environment.

Subtheme 2.4. Enduring long wait for a helping hand

This subtheme highlights the challenges visually disabled individuals face in healthcare, where long waiting times persist despite their priority status. The gap between their recognized priority and inadequate care reflects a systemic failure to address their unique needs, resulting in delays in diagnostics, procedures, treatments, and medication.

According to Binder-Olibrowska et al. 2022, although high-quality healthcare for PWDs is a legislative goal, the diverse needs of specific disabilities, including visual disability, are often overlooked, as demonstrated in Beige's experience:

BEIGE: *“Hinihintay ko pong may lumapit kasi nasa... medyo nasa dulo po ako eh— sa may bintana. No choice hintayin talaga. Kasi wala naman ano— medyo malayo kasi.”*

(I'm waiting for someone to approach me because I'm... kind of at the end— by the window. I have no choice but to wait. Because there's no... it's quite far.)

The participants' experiences highlight the neglect in accommodating visually disabled individuals in healthcare facilities, where their basic personal care needs are inadequately addressed despite their vulnerability and urgent medical concerns. Their account underscores physical barriers, such as being positioned away from main areas, hindering access to timely assistance.

Patients often experience frustration and dissatisfaction due to prolonged waiting times and inadequate attention during hospitalization. Studies, such as McIntyre and Chow's (2020), highlight the negative impact of delayed treatments on patient satisfaction, clinical outcomes, and patient anxiety. Delays in care reflect the importance of timely healthcare access, as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Addressing these delays is crucial for improving patient experiences and outcomes. Reduc-

ing waiting times can enhance trust in healthcare services, improve clinical results, and optimize care delivery.

Subtheme 2.5. Lapses in care that are avoidable

Lapses in care refer to mistakes or gaps in medical care, such as missed medications, delayed treatments, procedural errors, and inadequate monitoring or instructions. These lapses compromise patient safety, increase risks, and may lead to complications. Addressing them requires thorough, attentive care and streamlined healthcare access to ensure optimal outcomes.

Some of the participants experience a care gap marked by communication breakdowns and coordination failures in the healthcare system. For instance, Baby Blue expressed frustration and confusion over her surgery's rescheduling. She mentioned that the internal medicine department failed to communicate her scheduled surgery to the operating room.

BABY BLUE: “Yung resched ng operasyon ko. Yung IM internal medicine hindi niya nasabi doon sa operating room na February 21 ang operasyon ko sana hindi pala nainform doon sa uhh operating room. Ang tagal namin naghintay buti sana kung sinabi kaagad. Yun ang sinabi na— hindi wala wala ka naman pangalan dun sa operating room... yun kaya niresched.”

(My operation was rescheduled. The IM, the internal medicine, didn't mention in the operating room that my operation was scheduled for February 21. It seems like the operating room wasn't informed. We waited for so long; it would have been better if they had informed us right away. That's what they said—that my name wasn't mentioned in the operating room... that's why it was rescheduled.)

Hildegard Peplau's Interpersonal Relations Theory emphasizes effective communication between healthcare providers and patients, which is crucial for sharing information like surgery scheduling. Sharkiya (2023) further supports this, stating that communication builds trust and fosters a therapeutic relationship between providers and patients.

In addition, some participants often experience multiple punctures during blood extraction procedures, with staff struggling to locate veins. This leaves them feeling vulnerable and lacking control over the procedures. The repeated attempts at venous access highlight instances of inappropriate treatment, leading to unmet basic physiological needs. According to the Journal of Infusion Nursing (2020), multiple needle insertions can cause discomfort, reduce satisfaction, and increase the risk of venous depletion and infection. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs also suggests that repeated medical procedures negatively impact a patient's physiological well-being by inducing pain, discomfort, and potential complications.

MAIN THEME 3: ADAPTING TO HEAL

Adaptive healing refers to the strategies employed by hospitalized individuals with visual disabilities to navigate and manage their experiences effectively. These techniques include leveraging auditory perception for environmental navigation, drawing on faith for emotional support, using alternative adaptation and distraction methods, maintaining a positive outlook, and expressing emotions constructively.

Subtheme 3.1. Hearing as a basic sense

Hearing as a primary sense refers to the fundamental sensory experience of sound perception that plays a crucial role in adapting to the environment. In this context, individuals with visual disability rely on auditory cues to gather information about their surroundings and communicate with others to accommodate their needs. For instance, when their caregiver is unavailable, Violet relies on hospital staff to assist her with her needs, especially when it comes to using the restroom. However, she hesitates to ask for assistance because she can hear that the hospital staff are occupied with other tasks. As a result, she relies on her sense of hearing to determine whether the staff is ready to assist her.

VIOLET: *“Kung sakali na ano, ma ah... ihing ihi ka talagang ah... kasi maririnig naman kag- busy sila talagang parang mahiya ka mag ano ngay magsabi ng pasuyo.”*

(If ever, um... you really need to urinate because you can hear that they are busy. It's like you feel ashamed to ask for assistance.)

These experiences highlight the importance of auditory cues for visually disabled individuals in hospitals. According to Salih et al. (2022), sound is the primary source of information for the visually disabled, helping them navigate their environment and compensate for vision loss. Kolarik et al. (2020) also noted that loss of vision increases reliance on hearing for awareness, safety, communication, and interaction. Recognizing and addressing this reliance on auditory cues is crucial for ensuring the safety, autonomy, and well-being of visually impaired patients in healthcare settings.

Subtheme 3.2. Exercising one's faith

Exercising one's faith refers to using religion or other spiritual beliefs and practices to find strength and comfort. Thus, expressing reliance on prayer and seeking strength from God to endure difficult situations related to the challenges experienced during hospitalization.

The participants express their reliance on prayer by seeking strength from God to endure their situations. Thus, the findings show how faith can help them cope with difficulties faced at different points of their hospitalization. Challenges such as having no watcher present or a delay in admission despite having an emergency prompted the exercise of prayer as a coping strategy, especially if the participants cannot seek help from anyone. In relation to this, the study of Tshuma et al. (2022) highlights how visually disabled individuals turn to religion, faith, and belief in God to cope with the loss of their vision. Praying and seeking spiritual guidance is a form of support that offers comfort during difficulty. For many, faith is a beacon of hope, reminding them they are not alone. Engaging in religious practices and rituals can provide strength, resilience, and the ability to face the uncertainties associated with visual impairment.

Subtheme 3.3. Utilizing alternative techniques to cope

Utilizing alternative techniques to cope refers to the unique and personalized adjustments of hospitalized individuals

with visual disabilities to accommodate their needs and navigate the hospital setting effectively and independently. These techniques can also be applied to cope with boredom or inappropriate staff when undergoing checkups, interviews, and other procedures. These coping strategies or self-distraction techniques pertain to engaging in activities or other exercises to divert attention away from stress, perceived discomforts, or challenges faced during hospitalization.

One example of an alternative technique used is Blue's practice of counting steps and other beds in the ward.

BLUE: *“Parang tinansya ko, kung ilang.. beds.. yung pagitan.. yung bed ko sa CR para alam ko kung ilang beds o ilang hakbang ang gagawin ko para marating ko yung CR.”*

(I estimated the number of beds between my bed and the bathroom to determine how many I would need to pass or how many steps I needed to take to reach the bathroom.)

Due to the lack of assistive devices, Blue devised a plan to count steps and beds from his bed to facilities like the comfort room, allowing him to navigate independently when unaccompanied. His unique method of counting steps and beds stood out among participants. Kuriakose et al. (2022) emphasized the role of landmarks in navigation, while Sim (2020) noted that visually impaired individuals create personalized strategies to adapt. This approach highlights his ability to enhance autonomy despite limited accessibility, underscoring the importance of such strategies in promoting independence in healthcare setting.

Some participants used techniques like listening to music, talking to their watcher, and using humor to distract from boredom and anxiety during their hospital stay. Music therapy improves mood, pain, and anxiety (Tan et al., 2020), while Peplau's Interpersonal Theory highlights emotional support and coping strategies. Humor also helped participants manage rude comments or discomfort, aligning with Cann et al.'s (2014) findings on stress relief.

These coping mechanisms underscore the value of personalized strategies for visually impaired patients. Recognizing and integrating these approaches can help healthcare providers deliver more accessible, patient-centered care, enhancing dignity and emotional well-being (Sousa et al., 2019).

Subtheme 3.4. Venting out emotion

According to Victoria University of Wellington (2023), venting out emotion is defined as expressing and releasing negative emotions as a coping mechanism. This practice is one of the coping mechanisms done by the participants. Some participants had done this through crying when they reflected on their situation and when undergoing uncomfortable interventions.

This coping mechanism could be linked to the study by Tshuma (2022) on how adjustments to certain situations can result in greater self-efficacy, higher self-esteem, lower levels of depression, and a sense of more control. In addition, implementing catharsis in many ways has always been considered therapeutic. This includes how expressing feelings through written text can help enhance mental health (Bukar et al., 2019).

Subtheme 3.5. Optimism amidst the challenges

Optimism amidst challenges is the process of viewing difficult situations in a positive light. Instead of seeing obstacles, optimistic individuals view challenges as temporary hurdles that can be overcome with effort. It involves reframing setbacks as opportunities for growth, learning, and personal development.

The participants' experiences during their hospitalization highlight their unique ways of coping with challenges through optimism amidst the challenges. Their narratives offer insights into maintaining optimism and understanding despite facing difficulties in a hospital setting.

According to Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory, self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed in a specific task. Individuals with high self-efficacy approach challenges with confidence, while those with low self-efficacy may feel discouraged. Both Orange and Brown demonstrate self-efficacy in their coping strategies, maintaining a positive outlook and confidence in handling their hospitalization challenges.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hospitalized individuals with visual disabilities face challenges navigating hospital environments due to inaccessible pathways and a lack of assistive devices. These barriers may delay access to amenities and care, highlighting the need for improved orientation aids and accessible hospital designs. Positive healthcare interactions involve care and prompt attention, while negative experiences include delays, inappropriate behavior, and lapses in care. Despite these challenges, visually disabled individuals demonstrate resilience through adaptive strategies. Hence, policymakers should consider prioritizing accessibility in healthcare by conducting regular accessibility audits and providing training for healthcare providers on disability rights and assistive technologies. Aligning these efforts with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities may help advance inclusivity and equity. Practical measures such as installing tactile graphics, braille signage, and embossed materials could assist visually impaired patients in navigating hospital environments more independently. Collaboration with disability advocacy groups and the development of feedback mechanisms might further support accessibility initiatives. Hospitals are encouraged to explore implementing accessibility standards and providing financial support for inclusive initiatives. Sensitivity and accessibility training for healthcare professionals can significantly enhance patient interactions and care experiences. Offering seminars and workshops on the needs of visually disabled patients may foster better understanding and empathy among health workers.

Additionally, the Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) could advocate for accessible communication materials, specialized training, and periodic assessments to sustain inclusive practices. Future research is advised to examine the experiences of visually disabled individuals in both government and private hospitals to identify differences in care and communication strategies. Investigating the role of Humanistic Nursing Theory in promoting patient satisfaction and independence, as well as the influence of cultural and socioeconomic factors, could provide insights to inform equitable, patient-centered healthcare programs.

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Reviving Heritage: Itawit Building Rituals and Sustainable Architecture

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ABSTRACT

This article delved into Itawit construction rituals, stressing its importance in the cultural identity and architectural practices of the Itawit people of Cagayan Valley, Philippines. It described five main stages of these rituals: *Arte*, *Makergo*, *Patunak*, *Mattaliguni*, and *Aggunet*, all of which demonstrate a great regard for the environment and a spiritual connection to nature's invisible aspects. The study emphasized how these rituals direct the construction process and represent sustainability principles by incorporating socio-environmental issues into traditional activities. Using locally obtained materials and involving the community in the construction process, Itawit architecture showcases ethno-sustainable techniques that respect cultural legacy and environmental sensitivity. The findings highlighted the necessity of keeping these rituals as essential components of Itawit identity, as well as providing useful insights on sustainability that extend beyond their cultural setting. This investigation calls for the identification of indigenous knowledge systems as critical to contemporary sustainability discourse, supporting a holistic concept of architecture that balances human activity with the natural world.

Keywords: Itawit, building rituals, sustainability, Indigenous architecture, cultural heritage

INTRODUCTION

Rituals, especially in the Philippine archipelago, are distinct since they show traces of Prehispanic practices of animism. In the Philippines, ethnic groups practice rituals in different aspects of their lives, from womb to tomb, so to speak. In the case of building construction rituals, an example in the Philippines would be the consideration of how the Bakunawa (Panay's legendary sea dragon) moves in the interior of the house, considering its clockwise movements as well as how to capture and neutralize the Bakunawa using the building's post. While the subject is not new, it has been extensively discussed by early scholars of Philippine ethnohistory and ethnography as a subject of special interest in the Cordilleras as well as in Mindanaoan cultures. (Perez, Encarnacion, Dacanay, Fortin, & Chua, 1989; Scott, 1994) However, in the Cagayan Valley of the Northern Philippines, few have been studied *in detail* samples of building construction rituals of different ethnic groups, much less accessible data or books related to them, nor have architects themselves systematically studied these rituals conducted by ethnic groups. Despite that, some scholars have shown interest in these ethnic groups and their culture even after the Spanish colonial period (since much of the historical texts also included accounts related to indigenous cultures and traditions). Examples of these historical texts are by Fr. Diego Aduarte, O.P. (1640), Fr. Juan Peguerro, O.P. (1690), Fr. Julian Malumbres, O.P. (1918), all of which also contain "Christian biases" when writing about indigenous rituals or activities by labeling them "pagan" and even "demonic" in nature.

Cagayan Valley, like other Regions in the Philippines, is a vast area inhabited by different ethnic groups like the Atta, Ibanag, Itawit, Malaueg, Yogad, Gaddang, Isinay, and so on. These groups believed to be mostly Austronesian in descent, have been known to be linguistically and culturally related. Historically, their culture (for instance, headhunting) is also related to other cultures along the greater Austronesian extent – from the Pacific Islands to Madagascar. (Bellwood, 2017; Coballes & Dela Cruz, 2021; Keesing, 1962; Scott, 1979; Tan 2021) At present, the Itawit settlements are identified in the Middle and South of Cagayan Province, specifically along the

towns of Amulung, Tuao, Piat, Santo Niño, and even Rizal (Middle Cagayan) and Enrile, Iguig, Peñablanca, Solana, and the city of Tuguegarao (Southern Cagayan). Manzolim and Quilang (2015) also note that Itawit settlements are known in two barangays in Echague, Isabela, namely Tuguegarao (compare Malumbres, 1918 p. 378) and Salay.

The latest literature that deals with Itawit building construction rituals would be the works of Bangi (2019) and Manzolim and Quilang (2016) (compare Rocero, 1981). The former talked about the *Patunak* ritual (which will be discussed here), and the latter about the *Patunak* and *Sisiwa* – both studies among the first to be academically published works of Itawit building construction rituals. The purpose of this work is to enrich the information on the previous studies, as well as directly relate these rituals to the Indigenous architecture and "philosophy" (or design philosophy/process) of the Itawit based on oral accounts of elderly Itawit and shamans. (See also Dessein, Soini, Fairclough, & Horlings, 2015; Fox, 2006; Fernandez, 2015; Ching, 2007) The result would not only contribute to the existing knowledge and literature on Indigenous knowledge but also a potential its implications to policies and lessons from their thought process in the construction of their Indigenous dwellings as an expression of their sustainable architecture (see also Soini & Birkeland, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The research design of this work is Grounded Theory, where inductive logic was used to gather, analyze, and interpret data and later build theories based on the coded, thematized, and available information gathered (Ignatow & Mihalcea, 2018; Groat & Wang, 2013). This study initially surveyed local Itawit individuals, sourced available literature, and contacted local authors about Itawit building construction rituals. Since many of the respondents were met during the COVID-19 period, the data gathering entailed more online interactions like chats and calls to build rapport with them. All of the respondents are from Cagayan; hence, this study grouped the sources of data from two

distinct geographic zones of Cagayan: (1) Middle Cagayan or MC (Tuao, Piat, Santo Niño, Amulung) and (2) Southern Cagayan or SC (Solana, Enrile, Tuguegarao, Iguig, and Peñablanca). Later, some of the respondents met face-to-face, followed safety protocols, and were interviewed using guided questionnaires. Informed consent forms were also used and explained to the interviewees in Itawit about the contents of the interview. In total, the interviewees (face-to-face) of this study were narrowed down to only six (N=6), two of which were shamans (1 from Concepcion, Amulung, Cagayan, and 1 from Cattaran, Solana, Cagayan).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the interviews, fieldnotes, and transcripts of portions of the conversations were encoded, coded, and thematized for the different ritual stages or steps in the Itawit building construction process. Initially, it was thought that the most popular ritual, Patunak, was the first to be conducted. Still, based on the interviewees (N=5), the sequence for SC in the Itawit building ritual is (1) *Arte* à (2) *Makergo* à (3) *Patunak*; while the shaman interviewee from MC (N=1), the sequence for them is extended as (1) *Arte* à (2) *Makergo* à (3) *Patunak* à (4) *Mattaliguni* à (5) *Aggunet*. It is further discussed below.

First, the "Arte" is the art of divination for the Itawit that is based on their sacred book called "*Arte anna Planetarios*" – a handwritten document that includes omens, signs, good and bad days in each month, and the good and bad hours for each day. The Arte is not strictly used only for building rituals but is also consulted on special occasions like marriages. A shaman (MC) added that his copy of the *Arte* book is a family heirloom. (See Figure 1) Only shamans and some privileged people can secure a copy of the *Arte* by hiring a copyist (or *mamalasig*), who manually copies the book and sometimes pays with a full-grown pig or a large sum of money. It is believed that the purpose or origin of this practice is that the book was written as an interpretation of the ancient practice of reading signs, where the ancient Itawit observed the stars, clouds, animals, and insects for luck and omens. Both shamans interviewed (as well as older

adults) agree that before constructing a house, this process of referring to the Arte is the first stage of ensuring grace and health to the building's occupants.

Figure 1

A Portion of an Arte Book of a Shaman in Amulung (MC)

Mararacay a fecha tac Cadabulan	
Enero	tiene 8 días Mal 1º 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 16, 30
Febrero	@ 4 días Mal 1º 6, 7, 8
Marzo	@ 4 días Mal 15, 16, 17, 18
Abril	@ 2 días Mal 7, 15 @ @
Mayo	@ 3 días Mal 7, 17 4 20
Junio	@ 1 día Mal 1º
Julio	@ 2 días Mal 13, 15
Agosto	@ 2 días Mal " " 15, 18
Septiembre	@ 2 días Mal 16, 18
Octubre	@ 1 día Mal 15, 17
Noviembre	@ 2 días Mal 15, 6, 7
Diciembre	@ 2 días

Horas a maracay tac cada día	
Domingo	Alas 2 de la mañana Alas 12 del día y la noche
Lunes	@ 9 @ @ @ 7 de la tarde y la 11 de la noche
Martes	@ 3 @ @ @ 6 @ @ y la 8 @ @
Miercoles	@ 11 del día @ @ 12 y 2 @ @ y las 12 @ @
Jueves	@ 4 de la @ @ 4 @ @ y las 7 @ @
Viernes	@ 11 del día @ @ 3 del 2 día y las 6 @ @
Sabado	@ 9 de la mañana y las 5 de la tarde

Source: H.S. Dela Cruz, with permission

Figure 1 above is a portion of the book *Mararacay a fecha tac Cadabulan* (Bad days in every month) and *Horas a maracay tac cada día* (Bad hours in each day). Photo source: Harold S. Dela Cruz, 2022, with permission.

Second, the "Makergo" (contraction of "Maki-ergo," literally "to talk" or "to appeal") is done when choosing a location for the structure to be built, according to both shamans of Amulung (MC) and Solana (SC). This practice of petitioning is for the unseen elements residing inside the land known as *Kutu-Lusak*. A shaman places a glass of water on top of a flat framework above the ground, uttering a petition to the unseen elements; the shaman of Amulung (MC) says: "*Ikayat nu ballalaman nga mappatadag nak chaw nga sular, ikwak yaw danum; nu mari nu ikayat azazzanan nu gafu ya danum cha basu.*" ("If you let

me build unto this lot, I am leaving you this water. Reduce the water if you don't let me build.”)

The glass will be left overnight, and the water shall be observed if it is reduced the following day. If the glass of water is intact, the unseen elements agree with the petition. The reduction of the glass content means the elements do not agree with the petition. Also, suppose the water inside the glass was defiled (*matapangan*), like any kind of insect died inside of the glass of water. In that case, the unseen elements do not agree with the petition (see also Figure 2).

In some cases (like in Solana [SC]), three glasses of water are placed above the ground and laid in a triangular formation. At the center is a lump of salt, and adjacent to one side of the triangular formation is a small wooden cross. A *balulang* (open-latticed basket) is turned upside-down, covering the setup. If one or two of the three glasses of water were defiled, the position of the principal column of the house to be built would be moved away from the defiled glasses.

Figure 2
Elements for the Makergo Ritual

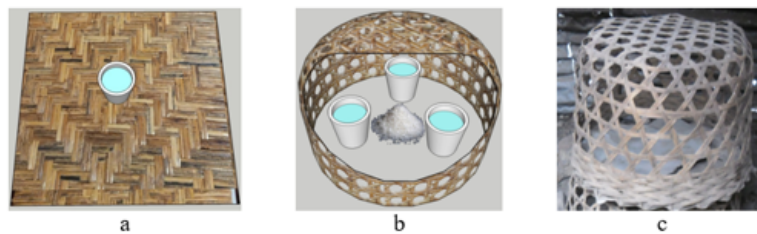


Figure 2 above shows (a) a glass of water placed at the center of a bamboo mat and (b) a Cutaway view: three glasses of water in a triangular formation with a lump of salt at the center. All are then covered with a *balulang* (c). This is interpreted based on the account of the shaman in Cattaran, Solana, Cagayan, and (c) a photo of a *balulang* or corn basket.

Third, after identifying the good day and hour from *Arte* and ascertaining the good location of the building in the

Makergo ritual, *Patunak* is ready to begin. The *Patunak* is a process wherein offerings, as envisioned by the shaman, are placed on the first and principal columns of an Itawit building. In all Itawit towns, particularly the carpenters and shamans, they consistently say that the *Patunak* is located "*Hiraya ya Silawan*" (Southeast) of the building (Fig. 3). Based on oral accounts, it is said that this placement of the principal column in the Southeast portion of the building is based on the Itawit belief that avoids the spirit realm in the North and the bad omen facing the West, and destructive winds from the Southwest. The rising of the sun and moon from the East is regarded as a source of grace. Death is directly related to the North; as such, every deceased Itawit should be laid down with his head oriented at the North. One idiomatic expression about someone who died is uttered as: "*Nappatazzilog (nappa-hilod) igginan*" ("He went North"). The placement of the cornerstone in the Southeast, in this sense, evades the death-related North and, therefore, keeps away the building occupant from ill fate. With this in mind, it answers why construction begins with two children who are not orphaned for the occupants' families to be kept away from death.

Figure 3

Location of the Patunak

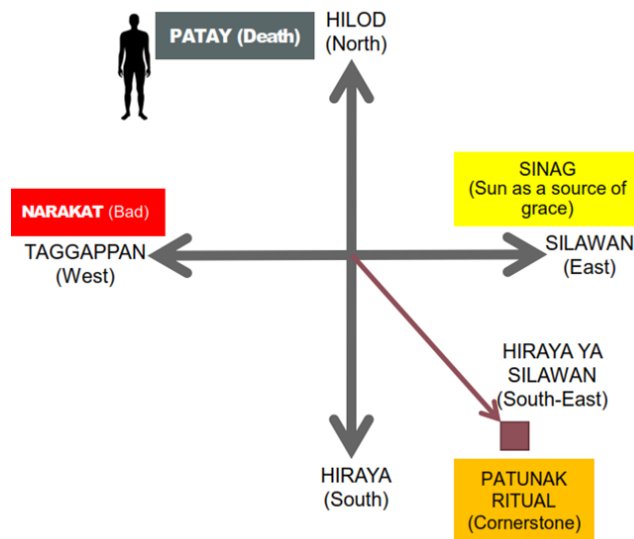


Figure 4

Placement of the Patunak based on Cardinal Directions

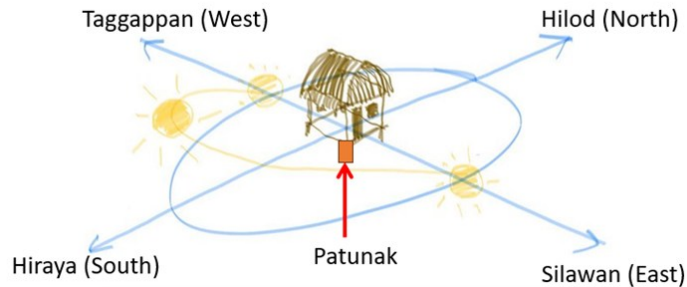


Figure 5

Patunak ritual in Iguig



Figure 5 shows an example of a *Patunak* ritual in action: (a) A simple prayer is offered for the departed ones – relatives or ancestors, (b) Two unorphaned children (boy and girl) traditionally begin the work, (c) Offerings are given, (d) Offerings are placed in a niche of soil at the foundation. Presented above is the *Patunak* ritual conducted in barangay San Vicente, Iguig, Cagayan. Note that the ritual is still practiced even if the building materials being used are steel and concrete. Photo source: Aris Tuliao, with permission.

Elders still recall that the *Kutu-Lusak* tells the shaman what they ask for to be included in the *Tarug* (the offering itself), which explains the varying offerings in different Itawit communities. The chicken and the pig are the only animals accepted to be offered as part of the *Tarug*. Their meat, blood, and so on are placed on saucers or bowls, as explained earlier.

Any offering derived from an animal with a horn is unacceptable.

Figure 6

Patunak Offering (Tarug)



Figure 6 shows the arrangement of the offering for the ritual. (a) The prepared elements of the *Tarug* are a *bannay* (dwarf cardamom) and a pot with rice cake; (b) after excavating the first foundation, a small "cave" or niche is done for the offering not to be disturbed during the pouring of concrete. This set of offerings was conducted in Catagamman, Tuguegarao City, Cagayan. Photo source: George Andal, with permission.

According to a practice of the *Tarug* in Amulung (MC), it is usually composed of one red bead ("*kiring*" in Itawit) with red string, one black bead with red string, one severed pig's head, one pair of fragile saucers with rice cakes (one saucer as the container of the offering, and the other as the cover), one pair of fragile saucers with cooked chicken (one saucer as the container of the offering, and the other as the cover), one pair of fragile saucers with *maman* (betel nut) or tobacco produce (one saucer as the container of the offering, and the other as the cover), and one clay flask of wine. Additional pairs of clay pots (three pairs) were used for the salt, rice, and water. All of these should be arranged carefully in the *lalaggang* (cauldron), and another *lalaggang* is used as a cover. Some are composed of one bead with red string, three fragile saucers with bread and biscuits, and three small clay pots with cooked food and rice cakes. In other cases, it is composed of one bead with red string, fragile saucers with cooked meat, small clay pots with cooked food and rice

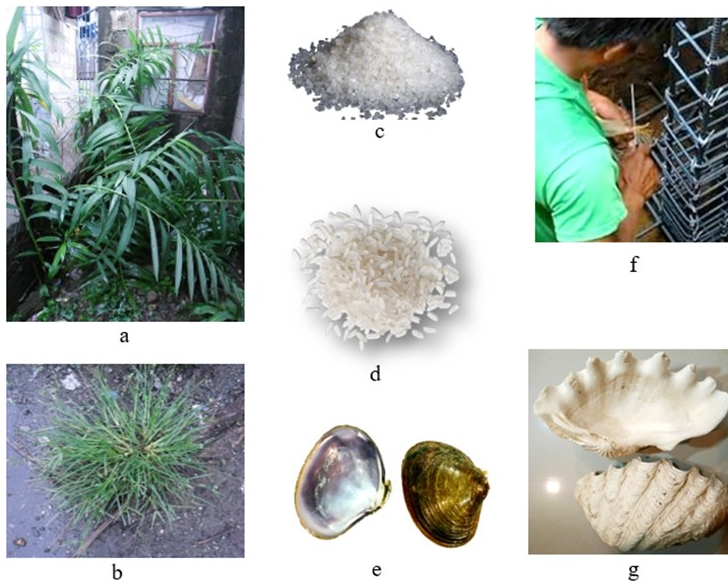
cakes, and one clay flask of wine. A *Tarug* that is disturbed by humans is said to cause illness and sickness to the building occupant. Older adults still recall the illness, insanity, and, in some cases, making a person fly or climb walls and roofs, which are said to be an effect of a disturbed *Tarug*. In these cases, a shaman is called and will advise on the preparation or replacement of the contents of the *Tarug*. A *Patunak* that does not include a *Tarug* will have its occupant ill in the future; hence, the shaman will advise on the preparation of a *Tarug*. A simple prayer is offered for the departed ancestors. The construction begins with two children (a boy and a girl) who are not orphaned, after which the construction (whether voluntary or hired) is continued until a convenient depth for the foundation is reached.

Patunak also requires the inclusion of other elements into the caved section of the excavated pit, such as the *bannay* (Dwarf cardamom), *nammurangngan* (Eleusine indica), *baggat* (rice), *asin* (salt), *kikkid* (cabibi shells), *daha-manuk* (chicken blood), and clam shells. The (1) *bannay* or Dwarf cardamom (literally "comfort") is said to bring comfort to the building; (2) *nammurangngan* or Goose grass to ward off mosquitoes and wood-boring beetles/insects from the building; (3) *baggat* (rice) to make the family live by the day and never go hungry; (4) *asin* is as a symbol for the blessing and preservation of the family; (5) *kikkid* to make the building cozy; and (6) *daha-manuk* (chicken blood) is also sometimes offered directly to the soil or placed in a bowl-like vessel. The shaman will just cut the flesh of the chicken (usually at its toe), and the blood will be placed in the first column erected at the *Patunak*. The chicken will be freed into the open and be let alone.

Offering vessels can vary depending on the economic (or even social) status of the owner to offer the *Tarug*. For example, these can be (1) *lalaggang* or cauldrons without ears or handles, (2) clam shells, (3) kabibe shells, (4) clay saucers, (5) *losa* or ceramic saucers, and (6) coconut shell. The largest *Tarug* offering would fill the *lalaggang* with a pig's head, gin, glutinous rice inside plates, beads, and even silver, and more can be added depending on the suggestions of the shaman; hence, a large

vessel is covered with another *lalaggang* of the same size. This large *Tarug* is the one typically asked from rich owners. The same concept of containing *Tarug* offerings using bowl-like or bowl-shaped vessels and covering them with the same material as its container has evolved through time, depending on the capability of the owners and their socio-economic status.

Patunak Elements



Patunak elements: (a) *bannay* (Dwarf cardamom), (b) *nammurangngan* (goose grass), (c) *asin* (salt), (d) *baggat* (rice), (e) *kikkid* (kabibe shell), (f) *daha-manuk* (chicken blood), and (g) clam shells. Photo sources: (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), and (g) Michael T. Tabao; (f) Harold S. Dela Cruz.

Omens and taboos are also considered in the Patunak ritual. For instance, the *lappang* (owl) – its singing or its landing in any part of the house is regarded as a bad omen, and the construction will be stopped. Also, the appearance of a *hiryan* (snake) during the ritual is considered a demon's sign. It is regarded as a bad omen in that the construction will be stopped. (EN) Another point to be considered is the appearance of a

vullungun (rainbow), which halts the ritual process. (IG) The ritual can't also proceed if the clouds block the sun, as the sun is the symbol of grace. (AM, IG) An injury of any of the workers during the *Patunak* is regarded as a bad omen. Offerings that are not allowed in the *Patunak* are animals with horns (e.g., carabao, cow, goat, etc.), hence only allowing pigs or chicken to be offered.

Fourth is the *Mattaliguni* ritual. In this phase, two older adults bring three things: salt, water, and rice. The night before the entire family will occupy the house, two older adults sleep in the house to hear the house lizards' sound. When a house lizard sounds along the window, the family should prepare simple food to move inside the house. On the other hand, if they hear the lizard's sound at the door, the family should prepare plenty of food and delicacies to invite good grace.

Figure 8

An Alipat (house lizard) in Tuguegarao City



Finally, *Aggunet* is done in the early morning when all of the household items are brought inside the house. After that, they shed a chicken's blood and sprinkle it first on the *Patunak* column, then on the remaining columns, and all of the doors and windows. This was done to protect the owner from evil spirits and to give good luck to them.

In the narrated process as described and shown, it can be said that there are two facets of the building ritual of the Itawit: (1) their respect for the unseen and (2) their deep understanding and connection with nature and its forces. Their respect for the

unseen elements was shown by asking permission from the *Kutu-Lusak* before constructing a house. This is delineated in the signs and omens that animals show during the process, as shown in the ritual *Makergo*. For example, the death of ants or insects even before the structure is built is a sign that they value life and that the future structure will harm the local habitat. This ancient practice of identifying sites shows that Indigenous knowledge and understanding have been in place with the Itawit culture of constructing buildings. Their reverence (sometimes, fear) and understanding of nature and forces are shown by the indigenous understanding of the effects of celestial bodies through signs and forces of nature through their usage of the cardinal directions for their buildings, which can be seen in the ritual *Patunak*, considering the correct placement of doors and windows for the health of its occupants. This ancient knowledge and application of the effects of the celestial bodies (the sun and the moon) and the cardinal directions (North, East, West, and South) are common with the Austronesian neighbors of the Philippines. (Fox, 2006) *Mattaliguni* again comprises natural elements: salt, water, and rice. The night before the entire family occupies the house, two elderly men sleep in the house to hear the house lizards' sounds. Finally, *Aggunet* is when the household items are brought inside the house; in the early morning, they shed a chicken's blood and sprinkle it first at the Patunak column, then the remaining columns, and all of the doors and windows. Realizing this deep connection makes this section aptly apply building construction rituals as a "socio-environmental sustainable" expression of the Itawit.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study identified Itawit's animistic belief and attachment to the unseen beings influencing their architecture as distinct from the modern Christian tradition. Spirituality (or animism, which is common to Asian building traditions), in this discussion, has shown remarkable similarities with the Itawit of Middle and Southern Cagayan to the point that it is "systematized" and has its process throughout the pre-construction to the post-construction phase of any Itawit

structure. This "religion" or the systematized process in the case of building construction tradition that is well observed throughout the Middle and Southern Cagayan has its place in their architecture, which makes it one of the strongest points of being a modifier in their building traditions. As discussed earlier, spirituality as a modifier of ethno-sustainable architecture constitutes several aspects: (1) the role of the shamans in each community, (2) building rituals, (3) omens, as well as (4) taboos and in this respect, the Itawit's spirituality is focused on their relationship with the unseen elements of nature and with the departed kin or ancestors.

Mediums, whether in the role of the shaman or the purpose of each offering, are attempts to link themselves with the natural world. As such, animism or their spirituality is significant to the idea of their sustainable architecture since it is an expression of (1) their respect for the unseen and (2) their deep understanding and connection with nature and its forces. Furthermore, rituals help protect and conserve several ecological constituents found in offerings, such as enumerated in Fig. 6. This protection of important ingredients in their rituals goes even to nurturing the said species in their respective localities. Their respect for the unseen elements is evident in the ritual *Makergo* - asking permission from the *Kutu-lusak* before constructing a house, which was delineated in the signs and omens that animals show during the process of their attempts to connect and reconcile themselves with these unseen personifications of elements around them. Even the death of ants or insects before the structure is built is a sign that they value life and that the future structure will harm the local habitat. This ancient practice of identifying sites shows that Indigenous knowledge and understanding have been in place with the Itawit culture of constructing buildings.

There is also the danger of the gradual loss of the practice of building construction rituals of the Itawit due to age or worse, the death of carpenters, elders, and shamans, and the transferring of the knowledge to the younger generations is less frequent. This, actually, has been a challenge in identifying and even locating practitioners of animism among the Itawit community, hence the very limited number of respondents. It

can be said that actions can be taken to document, protect, and preserve these expressions of cultural sustainability by researchers, the government, and other cultural agencies.

Environmental sensitivity is an innate aspect and quality that has been recognized in Itawit architecture, hence being sustainable. As discussed, the attached spiritual implications of plants and elements for offerings are well-manded and transferred via oral tradition. Environmental sensitivity is a crucial aspect of the building tradition, and plant growth and seasoning of materials are diligently noted to suit their needs individually and as a community.

This study also led to the conclusion that people, nature, and elemental beings have direct connections with each other, hence the gradual development of ritualistic steps in making sure that buildings are safe, comfortable, and conform to the community's tradition. Furthermore, the modifiers of their architecture (i.e., people, nature, and elemental beings) merit recognition, respect, and preservation of their beliefs, requirements, and wishes as reminders of their holistic relationship with each other. This recognition of their spirituality as an expression of ethno-sustainability, in effect, promotes cultural continuity and development to the new and child-bearing generations. In a wider scope, spirituality can encompass almost all elements of Itawit architecture, hence encouraging them to maintain its vitality as an intrinsic portion of their culture.

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“Buruan SAE” (Urban Farming) in Bandung as a Local Indigenous Initiative Rooted in Sundanese Culture to Support Urban Food Systems and Business Sectors

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ABSTRACT

Urban farming has emerged as a sustainable solution to address food security challenges in densely populated areas. In Bandung, Indonesia, the Buruan SAE – *Sehat* (healthy), *Alami* (natural), *Ekonomis* (economic) initiative exemplifies how indigenous practices, deeply rooted in Sundanese values and culture, integrate modern urban farming principles to strengthen urban food systems. This community-driven program fosters localized agricultural practices, blending traditional wisdom with contemporary sustainability frameworks to optimize food production in limited urban spaces. Sundanese cultural principles, such as *gotong royong* (communal cooperation) and harmony with nature, underpin the Buruan SAE approach. These values inspire collective efforts in urban farming, promoting the sustainable use of natural resources and strengthening community bonds. The initiative incorporates organic farming methods, waste recycling to produce natural fertilizers, and the cultivation of diverse crops suited to Bandung's urban ecology, addressing urban challenges such as limited green space, food accessibility, and climate resilience. Beyond household food security, *Buruan SAE* demonstrates the potential to support local business sectors, including hotels, schools, and restaurants, by supplying fresh, organic, and locally grown produce. Collaboration with these sectors not only diversifies income streams for urban farmers but also promotes sus-

tainability within these industries. For example, schools can integrate urban farming into educational curricula, fostering environmental awareness in students, while hotels and restaurants can source fresh ingredients, enhancing their eco-friendly branding and operational sustainability. Results from the program indicate significant contributions to food security, improved nutrition, economic opportunities, and environmental benefits, such as reduced carbon footprints and enhanced biodiversity. These findings highlight the potential of localized urban farming systems to complement global efforts toward sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). This paper advocates for the replication of Buruan SAE's approach in other urban contexts, emphasizing the importance of integrating indigenous practices, rooted in local culture, into broader urban planning, food policy frameworks, and business networks. By valuing Sundanese cultural heritage, local knowledge, and fostering community participation, urban farming initiatives like Buruan SAE can play a pivotal role in building resilient, inclusive, and economically supportive urban food systems.

Keywords: urban farming, city food system, local values, impact of Buruan SAE

INTRODUCTION

1. Global Food Issue to Local Respond

The global issue of food accessibility is a critical challenge that affects billions of people, highlighting the stark inequalities in our world. It encompasses the difficulty many individuals face in obtaining sufficient, safe, and nutritious food essential for a healthy life. This issue is deeply rooted in economic disparities, as poverty limits the ability of individuals and families to afford adequate food, especially in the face of rising global inflation. Geographical inequalities further exacerbate the problem, with regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of Latin America being disproportionately affected due to conflict, political instability, and weak infrastructure.

Climate change plays a significant role in shaping food accessibility. Erratic weather patterns, prolonged droughts, and devastating floods disrupt agricultural productivity, making it harder for communities, particularly in developing nations, to maintain food supplies. Meanwhile, poor infrastructure and inefficiencies in transportation and storage contribute to significant food loss and waste, compounding the challenge of distribution.

Urbanization and population growth also strain food systems, creating urban areas where affordable and nutritious food is scarce, while rising global demand pressures agricultural resources. The double burden of malnutrition—where undernutrition coexists with overnutrition—reveals the uneven nature of the crisis, as some populations suffer from insufficient food while others rely on calorie-dense, nutrient-poor options.

Efforts to address food accessibility demand a holistic and collaborative approach. Solutions must balance immediate relief with long-term sustainability, ensuring that everyone has equitable access to the food necessary for a dignified and thriving life.

The issues of food which are founded in around the world and showing the phenomena that there is a big gap between people who have open opportunity of food accessibility and those who have less or even no access of food.

Urban farming initiatives have gained prominence as solutions to urban challenges, such as food insecurity, environmental degradation, and the growing disconnect between people and nature. (Rosmah Murdad, et all.2022.) One notable example is "*Buruan SAE*" in Bandung, Indonesia. "*Buruan SAE*," which translates roughly to "a good garden" in Sundanese. SAE stands for (*Sehat* – health, *Alami* – natural, *Ekonomi* – economical) is an urban farming movement that integrates ecological sustainability with local cultural values. This initiative reflects a deep commitment to addressing socio-economic issues, fostering community resilience, and preserving Sundanese cultural identity.

2. The Role Of Buruan SAE For City's The Food System And Security

The city of Bandung faces major challenges in achieving food independence. Furthermore the Bandung City Food Service noted that 96% of food supplied to Bandung City is supplied from the districts of Bandung, West Bandung, Sumedang and other regions in West Java and outside West Java (Bapanas, 2023). This dependence makes the city of Bandung highly vulnerable to supply disruptions due to factors such as weather, transportation or price fluctuations. In this context, urban farming plays an important role as a local solution to support urban food security. Urban farming is a strategic alternative for increasing family food security in the city center (Gunawan et al, 2021). By utilizing home gardens, small open spaces and shared land, residents can produce some of their own food needs (Surya, 2020; Diehl, 2020). Even though the amount of urban farming harvest is relatively small compared to the city's total needs, the benefits are significant in improving the quality of family nutrition and supporting healthier food consumption (Siegnier et al, 2020).

Zhou et al. (2022) stated that the results of urban farming are usually green vegetables, herbs and fruit which are rich in vitamins, minerals and micronutrients. This helps directly meet the nutritional needs of families, especially in community groups who are vulnerable to malnutrition. By accessing their own harvest, families can reduce spending on healthy food ingredients which often have higher prices on the market (Grebitus et al, 2006).

Urban farming also has an important role in controlling food price inflation (Snell, W, 2022). Some commodities of farming that are often the cause of inflation spikes, such as chilies and shallots. For example, when the price of chilies soars due to distribution problems or bad weather, families who grow chilies in their yards do not need to buy at high prices on the market. This effect provides microeconomic stability for households while reducing pressure on local markets

In addition to the direct benefits to family food security, urban farming also strengthens the city's overall food security. With more residents involved in urban agriculture, the city of Bandung can reduce dependence on supplies from outside the

city. Even though its contribution is small in terms of quantity, urban farming creates an important foundation for diversifying food sources. This is the first step towards greater food independence. Urban farming programs in Bandung, such as those carried out through the Buruan SAE initiative, have proven the effectiveness of this approach. With support from the city government, community and partners such as universities, urban farming in Bandung not only creates economic benefits but also becomes an integral part of the city's sustainability strategy. Utilizing unused land or home gardens, urban farming makes a direct contribution to reducing organic waste by processing it into compost (Bunardi et al,2021; Gunawan and Saputro, 2023).

In the future, urban farming also has the potential to be developed on a larger scale through a collective approach, such as community gardens or collaboration with local industry players. These efforts could result in a more structured urban farming model, increase production capacity, and create a more resilient food distribution system within the city. Thus, urban farming is not only a practical solution to increase family food security but also an important strategy in building a sustainable, resilient and independent urban food system. This is a step towards a future where the City of Bandung provides an example for other cities in Indonesia.

3. Urban Farming as a Social Movement Dynamics in Bandung

Urban farming in some cases is seen from the perspective of environment and agricultural. However some of expert also see it from deferent perspective especially from social movement side. (Saed. 2012) Buruan SAE began as a government-supported initiative under Bandung's Food Resilience and Agricultural Agency (*Dinas Ketahanan Pangan dan Pertanian – DKPP*) but has grown into a broader social movement. It is rooted in community participation and collective action, encouraging Bandung residents to transform unused urban spaces into productive green areas. This movement is characterized by its emphasis on inclusivity, people engagement, collaboration, and sustainability. Besides, there are several aspects of Buruan SAE as a social movement (Reynolds, K and Nevin Cohen. 2016).

Some can be mention namely: **first**, *people Empowerment* (Atmaja. et al. 2021). The initiative empowers community to engage in food production, improving self-sufficiency and reducing dependency on external food sources. It particularly engages marginalized people, including low-income households, women, and youth, providing them with skills and resources to cultivate their own gardens.

Second, environmental improvement: Urban farming under Buruan SAE reduces polluted air, promotes biodiversity, and encourages sustainable waste management through composting and organic farming practices. Many of unused land are transformed into green spots. Even some of Buruan SAE (urban farming) spots are integrated with the organic waste processes. This integration has a meaningful impact since the city of Bandung is still facing the big problem of waste management. “Kampung Cibunut” can be one of the prominent example of spot which effectively in waste processing and management.

Third, *network Building*, the program fosters collaboration among local communities, NGO (GSSI – *Generasi Semangat Selalu Ikhlas*), academic institutions (Universitas katolik Parahyangan), and government agencies of Bandung (DKPP - Dinas Ketahanan Pangan dan Pertanian / Food Resilience and Agricultural Agency. This network amplifies its impact and facilitates knowledge sharing. Its network has become increasingly widespread with international institutions such as Rikolto (Belgium), Milan Urban Food Policy Pact – MUFPP (Milan - Italy), and of course with some cities in Indonesia. **Fourth**, *Resilience to Economic Shocks*: By promoting local food production, Buruan SAE helps communities withstand economic challenges, such as rising food prices or supply chain disruptions, by offering an alternative source of affordable, fresh produce such as plants that can cause an inflammatory effect such as chilies.

Buruan SAE which is a social movement is ultimately believed to be a potential force for the community and the Bandung city government in supporting the city's food system. The food security system cannot only be built and run by the government, but must also be able to mobilize and involve the citizens of Bandung. It must even be realized that the city's food system

which is also a food ecosystem also involves many parties and elements in the Bandung city community, including cultural roots that have a significant contribution in strengthening the city's food security.

4. Sundanese Cultural as Foundation of City Food System

The cultural roots of *Buruan SAE* are strongly inherent in Sundanese values and traditions. Sundanese culture places significant emphasis on harmony with nature and collective well-being, making it a natural fit for an urban farming movement. Some of Sundanese values will bring impact to maintain and strengthen the continuation of “*Buruan SAE*”. Some values that could be described for example : “*Tri Tangtu di Buana*” (three harmonies of life) which connected with the local wisdom and environmental stewardship. The Sundanese philosophy which concern on the balance between *humans, nature, and the spiritual realm*. (Saringendyanti. Etty 2018). *Buruan SAE* implement this philosophy by creating spaces where people reconnect with nature and foster environmental care. This is implemented by encouraging practices such as crop rotation, and organic farming, which align with traditional ecological knowledge and sustain soil fertility.

Another value is called **Sundanese Agrarian Heritage**. Agriculture has historically been central to Sundanese identity. Although urbanization has shifted lifestyles, *Buruan SAE* revitalizes this heritage by integrating modern urban farming techniques with traditional agricultural practices. (Kanosvamhira, Tinashe P.2024). For example, planting local staple crops like cassava and taro, which have cultural significance, ensures a sense of continuity with ancestral practices while supporting local diets.

The popular one called **Community Cohesion and Gotong Royong**. *Gotong royong*, or mutual cooperation, is a cornerstone of Sundanese and broader Indonesian culture. (Yuliawati, Dewi. et al. 2020). *Buruan SAE* leverages this spirit by organizing community-led activities such as shared planting days, collective composting efforts, and workshops on urban

farming techniques. These activities build trust and strengthen social bonds among participants.

The local culture that has become local wisdom, whether realized or not, has given a significant impact on the community involved in managing Buruan SAE. Informal institutions that emphasize the spirit of mutual cooperation further strengthen social cohesion and solidarity among local residents.

5. Social Benefits of Buruan SAE in Supporting Bandung Food System

Based on the survey, it is known that 12 groups (80%) stated that communities/groups have been formed by managing the Buruan SAE. It can be seen that there are new social interactions in managing Buruan SAE which later on became the formation of new communities/groups. Meanwhile, 3 groups (20%) stated that the activity of Buruan SAE did not lead to the formation of new communities/groups. (Gunawan, Theresia et al. 2023)

Socially, the management of *Buruan SAE* encourages social relations among people. Based on experiences show that the management of *Buruan SAE* made social relations among people in the community are closer. It certainly shows a good thing because good social relations between residents through *Buruan SAE* activities can have a positive impact and minimize the possibility of social conflicts that often occur in the social environment of the community. Buruan SAE management activities can also increase social awareness among people. All respondents stated that Buruan SAE's activities increase social awareness among residents. Based on the survey, in addition to improving social relations, Buruan SAE's activities have a positive impact by increasing social awareness among residents. This certainly shows a very good thing, because during the current pandemic, through Buruan SAE activities, people can still care for one another.

Buruan SAE demonstrates a profound impact on social empowerment by fostering collaboration, community resilience, and a renewed sense of agency among urban residents in Bandung. Through its emphasis on collective farming practices and shared resources, the program not only addresses material

needs but also strengthens the social fabric of participating communities.

Social empowerment within Buruan SAE arises from the way it engages people in meaningful, cooperative activities. Urban farming inherently requires collaboration, as participants share responsibilities for planting, maintaining, and harvesting crops. This shared effort creates a platform for dialogue, teamwork, and mutual support, leading to stronger social bonds. In areas like in Kopo and Pajajaran in Bandung, people who might otherwise have limited interaction have built a cohesive community centered around their shared agricultural goals. The program encourages participants to see themselves as part of a larger collective effort, which fosters a sense of belonging and mutual accountability.

Moreover, the program helps to reduce social inequality by creating opportunities for marginalized groups to participate actively in community development. Many participants in Buruan SAE include individuals from low-income households or those with limited access to economic resources. By providing tools, training, and access to productive land, the program empowers these individuals to take charge of their circumstances, reducing dependence on external aid. This not only boosts self-confidence but also enhances their ability to contribute positively to the broader community.

Education and capacity-building are integral to the program's social empowerment goals. Through workshops and practical training, participants gain valuable knowledge about sustainable agriculture and resource management. This transfer of knowledge democratizes access to expertise, allowing individuals across different socioeconomic backgrounds to acquire skills they can use to improve their lives. In turn, those who gain experience often become advocates and mentors within their communities, sharing what they've learned and expanding the program's impact.

The participatory nature of Buruan SAE also enhances social inclusivity. Decisions regarding crop selection, land use, and resource allocation are typically made collectively, ensuring that all voices are heard. This inclusive approach builds a culture of

mutual respect and reinforces democratic principles at the community level.

A clear example of social empowerment is seen in the way Buruan SAE has transformed public perceptions of urban spaces. Previously neglected areas, such as vacant lots or unused communal land, have been revitalized into thriving hubs of activity and cooperation. Residents no longer view these spaces as symbols of urban decay but as opportunities for growth and unity. This transformation reflects a deeper shift in how communities perceive their own agency and ability to drive positive change.

A compelling example of Buruan SAE's impact on social empowerment is observed in the Sa'uyunan Sarijadi Women's Farmer Group in Bandung. This initiative has been instrumental in empowering women through urban farming activities, fostering community engagement, and enhancing food security.

The Sa'uyunan Sarijadi Women's Farmer Group comprises local women who have embraced urban agriculture as a means to improve their livelihoods and contribute to their community's well-being. (Safitri, D., & Abdoellah, O. S. 2021). Through the Buruan SAE program, these women have received training in sustainable farming practices, enabling them to cultivate vegetables and herbs in their residential areas. This initiative has not only provided them with a source of fresh produce but has also created opportunities for income generation through the sale of surplus crops. The program's emphasis on community involvement has strengthened social bonds among participants. Regular group activities, such as planting, maintenance, and harvesting, have fostered a sense of solidarity and mutual support. Moreover, the initiative has enhanced the participants' confidence and sense of agency, as they actively contribute to their households' food security and the local economy.

This case exemplifies how Buruan SAE facilitates social empowerment by providing women with the skills, resources, and support necessary to engage in urban farming. It highlights the program's role in promoting gender inclusivity, community cohesion, and economic resilience within urban settings.

Buruan SAE’s focus on social empowerment highlights the potential of urban agriculture to go beyond food production. By fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and capacity-building, the program empowers individuals and communities to strengthen their social networks and reclaim agency in shaping their environments. This holistic approach to empowerment creates more resilient, cohesive, and equitable urban societies, as seen in the vibrant transformations within Bandung’s participating neighborhoods.

6. Buruan SAE In Supporting Green Environment

By utilizing previously unproductive yard land, Buruan SAE increases green space in urban areas. Planted plants help absorb air pollution, lower environmental temperatures, and improve air quality. This has a positive impact on mitigating the urban heat island effect that often occurs in big cities. Buruan SAE in Bandung stands as an inspiring example of how urban communities can embrace sustainability to create a greener, healthier environment. (Mediatrix, Yuliana Maria and Prasetyo, Pius Sugeng, 2022) This initiative transforms underutilized urban spaces into vibrant ecosystems, combining fresh air improvement, eco-tourism, and waste processing as integrated best practices for environmental stewardship.

One of the core achievements of Buruan SAE is its urban farming program. Previously barren or underutilized plots are now flourishing with greenery, including vegetables, herbs, and fruit-bearing plants. For instance, residents grow spinach, chilies, and tomatoes, which not only purify the air but also provide fresh, organic produce for local consumption. These plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, significantly improving the air quality in densely populated neighborhoods. This greening of urban spaces also reduces heat and enhances the microclimate, offering a more comfortable environment amidst Bandung’s urban sprawl.

The initiative also serves as a hub for eco-tourism, drawing visitors from within Bandung and beyond to witness firsthand how sustainable urban living is achieved. Guided tours through Buruan SAE showcase innovative agricultural practices, such as vertical gardening and aquaponics, which are particularly well-

suiting for space-constrained urban areas. For example, one popular attraction is their aquaponics system, where fish tanks and hydroponic plants coexist symbiotically—fish waste fertilizes the plants, and the plants filter the water for the fish. Visitors, including school groups and urban planners, come to learn and gain inspiration for implementing similar systems in their own communities.

Waste processing is another hallmark of Buruan SAE's success. Organic waste from local households, such as food scraps and garden trimmings, is collected and transformed into nutrient-rich compost using efficient techniques like bokashi fermentation. This compost is then used to fertilize the urban gardens, creating a circular waste management system that minimizes reliance on landfills. As a best practice, Buruan SAE actively involves residents in waste sorting and composting workshops, ensuring long-term engagement and education. One household, for instance, reported a 70% reduction in their waste output after adopting these practices, highlighting the tangible impact of this approach.

Buruan SAE's community-centered model is a best-practice example because it integrates sustainability into everyday life, proving that small actions can have far-reaching effects. It not only addresses environmental challenges like air pollution and waste but also fosters community pride, resilience, and environmental awareness. By demonstrating scalable solutions such as urban farming, eco-tourism, and waste processing, Buruan SAE has become a blueprint for urban areas striving to balance development with environmental responsibility. This initiative is a testament to how local actions can collectively contribute to global sustainability goals.

One of the best practices of urban farming (Buruan SAE) in Bandung called SEIN Farm – Sekemala Integrated Farming managed by The Department of Food Resilience and Agricultural – DKPP Bandung. SEIN Farm in Bandung is an exemplary model of the Buruan SAE (Urban Agricultural Land) initiative, showcasing best practices from an environmental perspective. (Metriyana, Arni and Zaim, Ilma Aulia. 2024). Situated in the south-east of Bandung city, SEIN Farm combines urban farming, waste

management, and community engagement to address urban environmental challenges while fostering sustainability and biodiversity.

SEIN Farm has transformed a previously unused plot of land into a thriving green oasis. Through its extensive urban farming practices, the farm cultivates a wide variety of plants, including leafy greens, medicinal herbs, and fruit trees. These plants act as natural air purifiers, absorbing carbon dioxide and other pollutants while releasing oxygen. The greenery significantly improves the microclimate in the surrounding urban area, reducing temperatures and mitigating the urban heat island effect.

SEIN Farm serves as a hub for eco-tourism, attracting visitors eager to learn about sustainable urban agriculture. Through guided tours and workshops, participants are educated on topics like organic farming, composting, and permaculture techniques. For example, SEIN Farm hosts regular hands-on sessions where visitors can learn how to grow their own vegetables using recycled materials such as plastic bottles or old pallets, further promoting environmental responsibility.

The farm's aquaponics system is a particular highlight, where fish and plants coexist in a symbiotic relationship. This system exemplifies resource efficiency, as fish waste provides nutrients for the plants, while the plants filter and clean the water for the fish. Visitors are encouraged to explore how such systems can be implemented in small-scale urban settings, making SEIN Farm a source of inspiration for environmentally conscious living.

A cornerstone of SEIN Farm's environmental impact is its waste management system. Organic waste from the local community, such as kitchen scraps and garden clippings, is collected and processed into high-quality compost. This compost is then used to nourish the farm's crops, creating a sustainable cycle that minimizes waste and enriches the soil.

SEIN Farm also encourages local households to participate in waste segregation and provides training on composting methods such as bokashi fermentation. As a result, the farm not only

reduces the volume of organic waste sent to landfills but also raises community awareness about the importance of reducing and reusing waste.

The diverse range of plants cultivated at SEIN Farm supports urban biodiversity by attracting pollinators like bees and butterflies, which are crucial for maintaining ecological balance. The farm's emphasis on organic farming eliminates the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals, further promoting a healthy ecosystem. By creating a green space in the city, SEIN Farm also acts as a natural buffer against flooding, as its gardens improve water absorption and reduce surface runoff during heavy rains—a critical function in an urban area prone to water-related issues.

From an environmental perspective, SEIN Farm exemplifies how Buruan SAE initiatives can transform urban landscapes into sustainable ecosystems. It addresses critical urban challenges such as air pollution, waste management, and biodiversity loss, while providing a replicable model for other communities. By integrating green spaces, waste processing, and eco-education, SEIN Farm not only enhances environmental quality but also inspires a broader cultural shift toward sustainability in Bandung and beyond.

7. Empowering Economies Through Sustainable Practices of Buruan SAE

Urban farming through the Buruan SAE program in Bandung City has made a significant contribution to various aspects of the economy, especially at the local community scale. Buruan SAE encourages people to utilize their yards or other narrow land for farming. Thus, food needs such as vegetables, fruits, and spices can be met without having to buy from the market. In the long term, this reduces household expenses and reduces dependence on supplies from outside the city. (Gunawan T, et al. 2023.)

In addition to personal consumption, the harvest from Buruan SAE can also be sold to local markets or to neighbours. This opens up new business opportunities, especially for housewives and community groups who previously lacked additional sources of income. In addition, products from urban farming

such as compost, plant seeds, and processed foods can also be marketed, contributing to the local economy.

This program not only increases community food security, but also opens up new economic opportunities through collaboration with industry players, such as green hotels that have concern to the environment (Gunawan et al, 2023). Erälinna, L., & Szymoniuk, B. (2021) highlighted that one of the main economic benefits of urban farming is to increase in local community income. Urban farming communities involved in this program can sell their harvests, such as organic vegetables and fresh fruit, to local markets or directly to commercial partners. By utilizing limited land in urban areas, urban farmers produce high quality products that have added value on the market. These products, produced organically, meet the demands of modern consumers who are increasingly conscious of health and environmental sustainability (Li et al, 2020). The collaboration between Buruan SAE and Mercure Hotels, for example, shows a concrete economic impact. With this collaboration, Mercure Hotels gets a supply of healthy and fresh food directly from urban farmers. This reduces logistics costs because the distribution chain becomes shorter. Apart from that, farmers gain greater profits because they can sell their crops at more competitive prices than through large distributors.

This program also encourages a reduction in carbon footprint. By producing and distributing food within the city, reliance on long-distance transportation is significantly reduced, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Follmann et al, 2021; Purwanto et al, 2023) This is in line with the vision of the city of Bandung to become a sustainable and environmentally friendly city. Diehl (2020) stated that in the long term, this initiative strengthens the city's competitiveness in creating an urban ecosystem that supports the environment and local economy.

Apart from that, urban farming also creates new jobs, both directly in agricultural activities and indirectly through supporting activities such as processing crops, marketing and managing organic waste into compost. This has an impact on empowering society, especially women and vulnerable groups, who are often marginalized in the formal economic sector. Overall, Buruan

SAE's urban farming activities provide broad economic benefits. Apart from producing fresh and healthy food for society and industry, this program also creates a circular economy model that contributes to community welfare, environmental sustainability and inclusive city development.

9. Challenge of Buruan SAE

Even though urban farming has shown great benefits in supporting food security in the city of Bandung, its development still faces significant challenges. One of the main challenges is the commitment of urban farming actors. Even though many people are interested in starting this activity, not everyone has enough time, skills, or motivation to continue doing it consistently. Busy lives in big cities often make urban farming activities a lower priority compared to other daily activities.

Another challenge is the limited land area in urban areas. The city of Bandung, which continues to grow rapidly, is experiencing the conversion of green land into residential and commercial areas, so that space for agriculture is increasingly shrinking. The remaining land is often small, less fertile, or not optimal for agriculture (Nicimbikije et al, 2024). This means that urban farming harvests tend to be limited in quantity, although the benefits remain significant for micro needs. While Buruan SAE has achieved significant success, it faces challenges such as limited land availability, funding constraints, and sustaining long-term community engagement. However, these challenges are also opportunities to innovate. Vertical gardening, hydroponics, and policy advocacy for green spaces in urban planning are potential avenues to expand its impact.

In addition, access to resources and technical support is also an obstacle. Many urban farmers face difficulties in obtaining quality seeds and the necessary equipment. Lack of knowledge about modern agricultural techniques can also reduce the effectiveness of this activity. Another challenge that needs to be considered is policy support that is not yet optimal. Although several government programs have encouraged urban farming, the implementation of these policies is often uneven at the community level. Support such as training, market access, or

economic incentives are very necessary to encourage the sustainability of urban farming activities in the city of Bandung.

9. Policies to Foster Urban Agriculture Growth

Urban farming is one potential solution to support food security and city sustainability. However, to overcome challenges such as limited land, lack of commitment from actors, and minimal access to resources, integrated and sustainable government policies are needed. One of the main policies is the allocation and optimization of land for urban farming. The government can identify unused land, green spaces or public areas that are underutilized to be used as urban farming locations (Li et al, 2020). In addition, incentives for private land owners who are willing to use their land for urban agriculture can also be provided, such as tax reductions or direct subsidies.

The government also needs to provide technical training and technological support to increase the capacity of urban farming practitioners (Gahndar et al, 2021) . Through this training, people can learn effective farming techniques, such as hydroponics, verticulture, or using organic fertilizer from household waste (Podder et al, 2021). In addition, the government can encourage the digitalization of urban farming, such as using applications to monitor plant growth, share information, or connect actors with markets. To increase community commitment, education and public awareness campaigns are needed. The government can work together with educational institutions, communities and the media to spread information about the benefits of urban farming.

Activities such as harvest festivals, urban farming competitions, or awards for achievers can provide additional motivation. Another policy is strengthening market access and economic support. The government can bridge the relationship between urban farming actors and large consumers such as hotels, restaurants or modern markets. By creating a stable market, urban farmers can be motivated to increase productivity. Subsidies for seeds, fertilizer or agricultural equipment can also help reduce operational costs for urban farmers.

In addition, the government must encourage cross-sector collaboration through a pentahelix approach, involving academics, business, communities, government and media. This approach can expand the scale and impact of urban farming by creating a supportive ecosystem. Finally, policies that are integrative and sustainable are needed, such as including urban farming in city spatial plans or environmental management programs. With this comprehensive policy, urban farming is not only a solution for food security, but also an important part of sustainable development in the city of Bandung.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Buruan SAE is more than just an urban farming initiative; it is a dynamic social movement grounded in cultural identity and collective action. By addressing environmental, social, and economic issues, it demonstrates how urban communities can reclaim their connection to nature while fostering resilience and cultural pride. As cities worldwide grapple with sustainability challenges, Buruan SAE serves as an inspiring model of how local wisdom and community-driven action can shape a greener, more equitable urban future.

Urban farming in Bandung City has great potential to support food security, improve the quality of family nutrition, and create an environmentally friendly circular economy. Although its contribution in quantity is insignificant compared to the city's food needs, its impact at the micro level is very significant, especially in reducing dependence on supplies outside the city. Apart from that, urban farming can help control inflation through planting strategic commodities such as chilies and onions, as well as improving environmental quality by processing organic waste into fertilizer. However, challenges such as limited land, low community commitment, and lack of technical and policy support must be addressed immediately. For this reason, the government, communities and the private sector need to collaborate in expanding the scale and impact of urban farming.

As a suggestion, the Bandung City government can optimize unused land for urban farming, provide training to the

community, and establish partnerships with industry players to create a stable market for harvested crops. Public education must also be increased to build public awareness and commitment. With these steps, urban farming can become the foundation for a more independent, resilient and sustainable food system in the city of Bandung, while improving the welfare of society as a whole.

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Reclaiming Indigenous Beliefs and Practices for Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability in the Cordillera

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the importance of Indigenous beliefs and practices in the Cordillera, Philippines, highlighting the necessity of maintaining cultural and spiritual ties to the land for environmental stewardship and sustainability. The research underscores the deep connection that Cordilleran communities have with their ancestral lands, regarded as sacred and vital for cultural identity and environmental management. By examining practices such as the muyong forest management system and other Indigenous rituals, the study illustrates the intertwining of spirituality and sustainability through traditional ecological knowledge. However, these practices are increasingly threatened by modernization, industrial activities, and the decline of traditional values. The study also investigates syncretism, where Indigenous beliefs merge with Christianity, resulting in unique perspectives on environmental ethics. The objectives include emphasizing the integration of traditional knowledge with modern conservation methods to foster sustainable development while honoring cultural heritage. The methodology involves a critical review of available written traditions sourced from the internet and libraries around Baguio City. Results indicate that syncretism offers a valuable framework for combining traditional and modern conservation approaches. The study concludes with recommendations for cooperation among Indigenous communities, policymakers, and scholars to protect land rights and create inclusive con-

servation strategies. This research underscores the significance of preserving Indigenous practices and adapting them to contemporary challenges, highlighting their role in addressing global environmental issues.

Keywords: Indigenous beliefs, environmental stewardship, traditional ecological knowledge, sustainable development, syncretism in beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

The decline of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and practices among Indigenous communities in the Cordillera, Philippines, poses a significant challenge to environmental stewardship and sustainability (Camacho et al., 2016; FAO, 2013). This study was conducted to address the critical need to reclaim and integrate these Indigenous beliefs and practices, which are deeply connected to the land and play a vital role in cultural identity and environmental management. Existing literature has highlighted the sacredness of ancestral lands and traditional practices like the *muyong* forest management system, which intertwines spirituality with sustainable environmental practices (Acabado, 2017; Camacho et al., 2016;). However, these practices are increasingly threatened by modernization, industrial activities (e.g., mining and logging), and the erosion of traditional values (Tauli-Corpuz, 2015; World Bank, 2021).

While some studies have explored the concept of syncretism—where Indigenous beliefs merge with Christianity—there remains a gap in understanding how these hybrid perspectives can inform modern conservation efforts (Acabado & Martin, 2020; Scott, 1988). Additionally, inconsistencies in the application and recognition of Indigenous knowledge in environmental policies, such as the Philippines' *Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA)* of 1997, further complicate effective stewardship (Lynch, 2011; UNDRIP, 2007).

This research aims to address these gaps by critically analyzing the intersection of TEK and modern conservation methods. By focusing on the Cordillera region, this study emphasizes

the importance of collaboration among Indigenous communities, policymakers, and scholars to protect land rights and develop inclusive conservation strategies (UNESCO, 2020; United Nations, 2009).

Ultimately, the objective is to provide a framework that integrates traditional practices with contemporary approaches, fostering sustainable development while honoring and preserving cultural heritage.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a critical literature review methodology to analyze traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and conservation practices in the Cordillera region, Philippines, synthesizing peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and gray literature (e.g., NGO reports ancestral domain records). It employed systematic searches across academic databases using specific keywords. It applied critical discourse analysis and thematic coding to uncover patterns and power dynamics in how Indigenous knowledge is represented in conservation literature.

Ethical considerations focused on decolonizing methodologies and addressing conflicting narratives, particularly between state-led conservation efforts and Indigenous stewardship, through a political ecology lens.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Overview of the Cordillera Region

The Cordillera Region, located in Northern Luzon, Philippines, spans approximately 1.75 million hectares and includes the provinces of Abra, Mountain Province, Kalinga, Apayao, Ifugao, Benguet, and the city of Baguio, with a population of about 1.3 million (Rimando 2015). This region, renowned for its rich mineral deposits like gold and copper, is also a crucial source of several major rivers such as the Chico, Agno, and Abra. Historically covered by dense forests, which have since diminished, the Cordillera's rugged terrain limits extensive agricultural use.

The region is the ancestral land of the Indigenous peoples collectively known as the Igorots, encompassing seven major ethnolinguistic groups, including the Kankanaeys, Bontocs, Kalingas, Ifugaos, Tingguians, Apayao (Isneg) and Ibaloy each have distinct socio-cultural systems and territories (Igorotage 2024; PSA-CAR 2024).

The Igorots of the Cordillera are Indigenous People with a unique culture passed down through generations (Molintas 2019). During a discussion at the University of the Philippines in Baguio, a woman challenged the speaker's use of the term 'Cordillera,' expressing a preference for 'Igorot' instead (Abad 2004). This incident highlighted a misunderstanding about 'Igorot.'

Sometimes linked to stereotypes and ethnocentrism. Additionally, Scott (1977) noted that for some, 'Igorot' can carry a derogatory implication of being pagan and uncivilized (p. 52). However, this does not accurately reflect their identity (Del Castillo et al., 2023).

A deep connection to their land marks their culture. It is characterized by communal land management, subsistence agriculture, and communal solid values. Traditional socio-political systems emphasize consensus and respect for elders, with rituals underscoring the sanctity of life and death (Molintas 2019). Despite the erosion of traditional systems due to external and internal pressures, the indigenous people's bond with their land remains robust. The Cordillera also hosts a notable non-indigenous population, mainly in Baguio and provincial town centers, alongside indigenous communities living near regional boundaries (Del Castillo et al., 2023). The cultural significance of the Cordillera is equally profound. This region is home to a variety of indigenous groups, each with distinct languages, traditions, and social structures. Among the prominent indigenous groups are the Ifugao, Kankanaey, and Ibaloi. These groups have developed a unique cultural identity closely tied to their environment, reflected in their traditional practices and belief systems (Carling 2001).

The Ifugao are perhaps best known for their elaborate rice terraces, which are considered engineering marvels and are rec-

ognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The Ifugao rice terraces, built over 2,000 years ago, exemplify a sophisticated system of irrigation and terracing that demonstrates their deep understanding of sustainable agricultural practices and environmental stewardship (Scott 1977, 52). This ancient agricultural system is a testament to their engineering skills. It reflects their spiritual connection to the land, where agriculture is interwoven with ritual and community life (Camacho et al. 2016, 7).

The Kankanaey, residing primarily in the western part of the Cordillera, are known for their intricate weaving and vibrant cultural rituals. Their social organization is based on a communal system where kinship ties and ancestral traditions play a central role in maintaining harmony within their communities (Sitabayasi 2022). Kankanaey culture is marked by its rich oral traditions, ceremonial practices, and a deep reverence for ancestral spirits, which are integral to their worldview and daily life (Domogen nd; Sitabayasi 2022).

The Ibaloi people, part of the Indigenous groups in the Cordillera, have distinct cultural practices, including unique clothing, rituals, and gold mining traditions, which reflect their environment and beliefs (Sumeg-and 2005; "Ibaloi People" 2024). Their social and religious practices are intertwined with their spiritual beliefs, especially in the context of feasts and ceremonies like the *cañao*. Their traditional music forms, such as the Jew's harp and nose flute, are considered sacred in these rituals (Ibaloi People - Wikipedia 2024). They are recognized for their elaborate burial practices and ceremonies that reflect their beliefs about life, death, and the afterlife (Abordo and Coronation 2019). The Ibaloi communities practice a form of animism where natural elements and ancestors are believed to have spiritual significance, guiding their agricultural and social activities (Laugrand et al. 2020).

The Cordillera's indigenous peoples have historically maintained their cultural practices despite external pressures from colonization and modernization (Peterson 2010). Their traditional ecological knowledge has played a crucial role in preserving the region's biodiversity and promoting sustainable environmental practices. This knowledge is passed down through

generations and is deeply embedded in their cultural rituals and daily lives (Ting et al., 2008).

The Cordillera region stands out for its geographical grandeur and cultural richness. Indigenous groups such as the Ifugao, Kankanaey, and Ibaloi embody a deep connection to their environment through traditional practices and belief systems (Anacin 2009; Peterson 2010). Understanding their way of life provides valuable insights into the region's cultural and ecological significance, highlighting the importance of preserving their heritage and integrating their knowledge of contemporary environmental stewardship.

Cultural and Religious Contexts

Before the arrival of Christianity in the Cordilleras, the indigenous peoples, including the Ifugao and other Igorot groups, practiced animism. Their belief system revolved around the idea that spirits inhabited nature and that the forces of the natural world were sacred and interconnected with human life (Britannica 2024; NativeTribe.info n.d.). This animistic worldview imbued daily life with reverence for natural elements such as mountains, rivers, and forests, which were seen as home to ancestral spirits and deities. These beliefs informed their agricultural practices, rituals, and community organization, fostering a deep spiritual connection to the land (Britannica 2024; NativeTribe.info n.d.).

The transition from animism to the adoption of Christianity was marked by resistance in some parts of the Cordillera, with many communities integrating Christian beliefs with their indigenous practices, creating a unique blend of spirituality. However, the core animistic values emphasizing nature's sanctity and the guardianship of ancestors over the land remained influential in the region's cultural identity (Yzagada 2021; "Igorot People" 2024).

Studying Indigenous environmental practices within cultural and religious contexts is crucial for understanding their full significance and potential applications (Kimmerer 2013; Sinthumule 2023). Indigenous environmental stewardship is often intertwined with religious beliefs and rituals that promote ecologi-

cal harmony. In the Cordillera, ancestor reverence plays a significant role in environmental management (Sacredness of Nature 2024; Adivasi.org 2024). These practices are rooted in a belief system that views ancestors as guardians of the land, thus ensuring that environmental stewardship is a communal and sacred responsibility (Taray 2008). This perspective contrasts sharply with Western approaches, often separating spiritual beliefs from environmental management (Global Diversity Foundation 2021).

Understanding these practices within their cultural and religious contexts provides valuable insights into their effectiveness and sustainability. For example, Ifugao's forest management practices are guided by spiritual beliefs that emphasize the interconnectedness of all life forms (Yodisphere 2022). These beliefs foster a sense of stewardship that extends beyond immediate human needs to encompass long-term ecological health (Camacho et al. 2016). This holistic approach underscores integrating cultural values with environmental policies to achieve sustainable outcomes.

The spiritual dimensions of these practices contribute to their effectiveness by fostering a deep sense of responsibility and connection to the environment. Auger (2016) argues that cultural continuity, including traditional environmental practices, determines Indigenous health and well-being. This continuity ensures that environmental stewardship is embedded in the daily lives of Indigenous communities, reinforcing sustainable practices.

The history of religious groups and missionaries in the Cordillera region of the Philippines reflects a complex interplay of indigenous traditions and external influences. Early Spanish missionaries in the 16th century sought to Christianize the Igorot people, yet their efforts were resisted mainly due to the mountainous terrain and strong indigenous beliefs (Scott 1974).

By the American colonial period in the early 20th century, Protestant missionaries introduced educational and health programs, mainly through the Episcopal Church, which established a significant presence in the region (Wiber 1991, 49). Catholic missions, however, persisted and expanded under orders like the CICM (Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary), which

built institutions like Saint Louis University to serve as centers for education and evangelization ("Saint Louis University Baguio City History & Institutional Statements" 2024). These missionary activities were often met with tension as they sought to supplant indigenous spiritual practices. However, they also contributed to socio-economic development in the Cordillera. Today, Christian and indigenous spiritualities coexist, reflecting the region's pluralistic religious landscape.

In the study by Del Castillo et al. (20203), these Indigenous Peoples possess distinct cultural traditions and religious beliefs. The Cordilleran inherit these practices from their elders and integrate them into their everyday lives (Camacho et al. 2016; Del Castillo et al. 20203). Their religious practices involve animal sacrifices, offerings to ancestral spirits, and herbal remedies (Celino 1990). These beliefs also influence their approach to environmental conservation, as they consider nature sacred and emphasize protecting and preserving it (Molino, 2022).

Cordilleran Indigenous people navigate a blend of traditional religious beliefs and modern practices, particularly Christianity. While many have adopted Christianity, they often integrate their Indigenous traditions into their Christian practices, resulting in hybrid religious expressions (Aguilar 2018; Del Castillo et al.20203). This fusion illustrates the complexity of religiosity among Cordilleran. It highlights the interplay between their cultural heritage and contemporary spiritual practices. Understanding this blend offers insights into their cultural identity, values, and environmental attitudes (Del Castillo et al. 20203).

Socio-cultural, Religious, and Political Challenges

In continuing research on Indigenous beliefs and environmental stewardship of people worldwide, cultural and religious challenges are inevitable as part of local experiences. Experts (Buchler & Rossi 1980; Friedl & Pfeiffer 1977, 283-284; Champagne 2007, 79) argue that Indigenous peoples have rich and diverse cultures based on a profound spiritual relationship with their land and natural resources. They claim that indigenous societies do not have dichotomies such as nature vs. culture. Indigenous peoples do not see themselves as outside the realm of nature. However, in the contemporary era, I observe that in Cordil-

lera, in the northern part of the Philippines, social, religious, and political institutions have greatly affected the traditional ways of the Indigenous people. Traditionally, one salient characteristic of Indigenous cultures is that they are based on a collective perspective; today, this might no longer be the case.

Since the advent of modernity and economic capitalism, the Indigenous traditional religious and cultural practices have been threatened by individualism and the claim for private property. Capitalism is an economic system marked by private ownership of property and driven by profit motives (Dimonye 2024). This individualistic and capitalist mentality resulted in environmental problems of biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change (Pollock 202). These environmental problems were being intensified by so-called development programs that are designed for resource extraction, especially in the homelands of indigenous peoples. Bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, along with multinational corporations, often implement projects that disregard indigenous rights and their deep connection to nature, leading to resistance that is frequently suppressed through force, deception, or state military intervention.

The encroachment of free market capitalism primarily drives the erosion of traditional ecological and spiritual values in Indigenous communities (United Nations 2009). These communities, which once united against external threats like corporations and corrupt government officials seeking to exploit their ancestral lands, are now adopting the values they previously opposed. Younger generations, swayed by capitalist ideals, increasingly see their land as a resource to be exploited for profit, undermining the community's deep spiritual connection to the land. This change weakens the communities' ability to resist outside pressures and creates internal rifts, as some members support resource extraction. In contrast, others strive to protect the land.

Gregory E. Sterling (2024) emphasizes that addressing issues requires more than scientific or political efforts; it demands a profound ethical and spiritual transformation. He argues that humanity's responsibility as stewards of creation, the imperative for intergenerational equity, and the need for social justice—

especially for people experiencing poverty disproportionately affected by climate change— necessitate action led by moral conviction and community engagement, akin to the religious leadership in the civil rights movement.

Significance of Studying Indigenous Practices

Indigenous knowledge can be broadly defined as the knowledge that an indigenous (local) community accumulates over generations of living in a particular environment (Ryser 2011). In the Philippines, indigenous groups like the Ifugaos of the Cordillera Mountains continue to thrive in their self-sufficient communities. Despite changes in Indigenous knowledge systems, practices promoting forest sustainability remain strong (Camacho et al., 2013). Studying Indigenous environmental practices is not only an academic exercise but a practical necessity in the face of global environmental challenges. As climate change and ecological degradation intensify, there is growing recognition of the value of Indigenous knowledge systems in addressing these issues. Preserving and applying traditional ecological knowledge can enhance contemporary environmental strategies and contribute to more effective conservation practices (Bennett et al., 2018).

Indigenous knowledge provides critical insights into sustainable resource management practices, offering valuable contributions to holistic and practical solutions (Patterson et al., 2023). Collaborative conservation initiatives involving Indigenous communities have achieved superior environmental conservation and community well-being outcomes. Integrating diverse knowledge systems, such as religious beliefs, alongside Indigenous wisdom can foster innovative approaches and mitigation strategies for addressing longstanding environmental challenges (Patterson et al., 2023). In forest management contexts, indigenous knowledge offers profound insights into local ecosystems, essential for safeguarding natural resources (Yahaya 2013). Incorporating traditional practices in geopark management also enhance community engagement and foster the preservation of cultural heritage (Halim et al. 2017).

Indigenous Beliefs and Worldviews in the Cordillera

In Cordilleran beliefs, the land is considered sacred, with a profound cultural and spiritual significance. The concept of ancestral domains is central to their worldview. These domains are not seen as private property but as sacred heritage passed down through generations. They represent a continuum of life, culture, and identity (Santiago 2013).

Rituals and ceremonies are crucial for maintaining the sanctity of the land. For example, the *pagtatawid* ceremony, which involves the transfer of land stewardship, is performed to seek the approval of ancestral spirits. This ceremony ensures that new stewards respect and uphold the land's sanctity, highlighting the sacred relationship between the Cordillerans and their ancestral domains (ICBE n.d.). Such practices are spiritual and practical, ensuring the land is managed sustainably. By integrating rituals with land management, the Cordillerans balanced spiritual and ecological needs, demonstrating a holistic approach to environmental stewardship (Agbayani 1993).

Allad-iw (2014) explains that for the Cordillerans, land is not merely a resource but a fundamental aspect of their identity, culture, and existence. Their ancestral lands encompassing territories, waters, and resources are considered sacred and integral to survival. This deep connection is rooted in their traditional practices of sustainable resource management and collective ownership, where land is seen as a shared inheritance passed down through generations. The Cordillerans' relationship with their ancestral lands is not defined by individual ownership but by collective responsibility and stewardship (Carling 2001; Cordillera Peoples Alliance, n.d.). Their struggle for land rights stems from a historical context of colonial dispossession and a continued fight against development projects that threaten their way of life. The concept of land for the Cordillerans is not simply about ownership but about preserving their cultural heritage, ensuring their future, and maintaining a harmonious balance with the environment (Alad-iw 2014; Pacos 2018). The discourse on land and resources among the Cordillera peoples can only be understood within the context of their beliefs and day-to-day practices.

"To claim a place is the birthright of every man. The

lowly animals claim their place; how much more man? Man is born to live. *Apu Kabunian*, lord of us all, gave us life and placed us in this world to live human lives. Moreover, where shall we obtain life? From the land. To work the land is an obligation, not merely a right. In tilling the land, you possess it. Thus, land is a grace that must be nurtured. The land is sacred. The land is beloved. From its womb springs our Kalinga life" ("The Cordillera People Right to Land" 2024).

These were the words of a Kalinga warrior chief, Macliing Dulag, explicitly describing the Cordillera peoples' concept of land. Like most Indigenous peoples worldwide, the Cordillera peoples equate land with life, both given by the Creator. Land, in this sense, includes all the resources below and above the earth's surface ("The Cordillera People's Right to Land," 2024).

Indigenous environmental stewardship is characterized by a deep connection to the land and a holistic view of ecological systems. Traditional practices, such as cultural burning and rotational farming, are grounded in extensive knowledge accumulated over generations. For example, Adlam et al. (2022) emphasize the role of Indigenous cultural burning in managing fire regimes to enhance biodiversity and reduce wildfire risks. These traditional methods often outperform modern approaches in terms of ecological sustainability and resilience (Adlam et al., 2022).

In the Cordillera region, the Ifugao people's forest management practices are informed by spiritual beliefs that underscore the interconnectedness of all life forms (Butic and Ngidlo 1997; World Agroforestry 2020). This practice involves rituals that honor the environment and ensure its sustainable use (Camacho et al. 2016). Such practices demonstrate the efficacy of integrating cultural values with environmental management strategies, offering a model for contemporary conservation efforts (Butic and Ngidlo 1997; World Agroforestry 2020; Camacho et al. 2016).

Moreover, incorporating Indigenous perspectives into environmental management fosters greater respect and collabora-

tion between Indigenous communities and policymakers (Butic and Ngidlo 1997; World Agroforestry 2020; Camacho et al. 2016). This integration can lead to more inclusive and culturally sensitive environmental policies crucial for achieving sustainable development goals. The revitalization of Indigenous practices, supported by research and policy initiatives, can contribute significantly to global efforts to combat climate change and promote ecological resilience (Hernandez et al., 2022).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Indigenous cultures worldwide have developed complex systems of environmental stewardship deeply rooted in their spiritual and cultural beliefs (Beckford et al. 2010; Fiveable 2024). These systems are not merely practices but are embedded in a worldview that perceives nature as sacred and interconnected with human life. In the Philippines, indigenous knowledge has been acknowledged for its role in sustaining production systems, with numerous studies validating its technical and scientific reliability. It was not until the 1992 Earth Summit that the Philippine government formally recognized the potential of these indigenous knowledge systems. Before this, researchers, development workers, and lawmakers in the Philippines focused on finding "modern" methods to achieve their goals.

Research shows that Indigenous practices, such as traditional fire management and rotational farming, effectively preserve biodiversity and prevent environmental degradation (Smith et al. 2024). These methods, informed by centuries of observation and experience, often outperform modern techniques in terms of sustainability and resilience. For instance, cultural burning, practiced by various Indigenous groups, helps reduce fuel loads, prevent large-scale wildfires, and enhance biodiversity (Adlam et al. 2022). Such practices highlight Indigenous traditions' deep environmental knowledge and efficacy in contemporary conservation efforts.

Traditional Environmental Practices

The Ifugao's *muyong* system is a traditional forest management practice where privately owned woodlots are carefully

tended to provide essential resources like water, fuel, and food. The term "*muyung*" describes privately owned woodlots among the Tawali subgroup of the Ifugao. This system reflects Ifugao's deep cultural connection to the environment, combining sustainable silviculture, agroforestry, and natural regeneration techniques to maintain the health of the forest and surrounding agricultural terraces. The *muyong* supports their physical needs and preserves their cultural practices and ecological balance (Camacho et al. 2012).

Furthermore, the *lapat* system is a traditional forest conservation strategy practiced by the Isneg and Tingguian peoples of Abra Province in the Philippines (Molintas 2004). It involves designating specific forest areas as off-limits to resource extraction for a period ranging from a few months to several years, depending on the area's need for ecological recovery. This practice helps in the natural regeneration of forests by allowing trees, plants, and wildlife to recover from previous disturbances.

During the *lapat* period, activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering are prohibited, with some systems also imposing restrictions on harvesting specific plant and animal species (Molintas 2002). The *lapat* system is an effective way to sustainably manage natural resources and ensure their availability for future generations, as seen in areas like Bucloc, where it is enforced through both customary and local laws with designated individuals responsible for monitoring compliance (Camacho et al. 2012).

Dolom and Serrano (2005) also mentioned that the *Ikalahans*, a subgroup of the Ifugao tribe in the Caraballo Mountains, have developed a range of traditional practices for sustainable agriculture and water conservation. According to Walpole et al. (1993), their agricultural methods include the *Inum-an* system, which involves site selection, clearing, burning, planting, weeding, harvesting, and following to maintain soil fertility and productivity. *Gengen* or terracing combined with composting and *Day-og*, a composting technique, are used to conserve soil and nutrients. The *Balkah* system employs vegetative terracing with tiger grass to prevent soil erosion. *Kinebbah* involves leaving fields fallow to restore fertility (Dolinen 1995; Camacho et al.

2012). *Tuping* refers to rock walls built to prevent soil erosion. *Pamettey*, a homemade pesticide made from local plants and ash, is used to protect crops from pests. These traditional methods reflect the *Ikalahans'* deep understanding of their environment and commitment to sustainable land management. (Dolom and Serrano 2005; Camacho et al. 2012).

Dictaan-Bang-oa (2010) highlights the sustainable water management practices of the Kankanaey in Besao, Northern Philippines, which are deeply rooted in traditional religious beliefs and customary laws. Central to these practices are principles such as *inayan*, a moral code discouraging harmful actions, and reverence for *nakinbaey*, spiritual beings associated with water sources, which ensure the sustainable use of natural resources. Rituals like *legleg* and communal systems such as *dumapat* facilitate equitable water distribution and resource maintenance through collective decision-making and labor-sharing. Complementary to these cultural practices, the community uses sustainable forestry, including reforestation and selective logging, to protect water sources. Despite challenges from resource disputes and modern agricultural demands, these Indigenous frameworks—blending cultural traditions with local governance—demonstrate the resilience and adaptability of the Kankanaey in preserving ecological balance and communal well-being (Dictaan-Bang-oa 2010).

The Kankanaeys practice a mindful approach to keeping their water clean. They refrain from spitting and using soap or chemicals near their water sources. Even the remains of humans or animals are not permitted to pass through these areas. Offending the *nakinbaey* can lead to the abandonment of the water source, resulting in a reduced supply or a complete cutoff (Dictaan-Bang- oa 2010). Therefore, it is crucial to hold a cleansing ritual led by community elders, with all water users participating, to honor and appease the *nakinbaey* that resides in the water source.

The significance of water in Kankanaey life is also expressed in local poetry, such as the piece presented by Gaongen (2022) at the George Town Literary Festival in Malaysia, titled *The Strength of Water*. This poem highlights water's dual nature:

its capacity to cause destruction, like a tsunami, and its ability to restore and sustain life in the village, emphasizing its importance even in the "elders' prayers." Abance (2020) features thirty-three rituals from the Benguet Kankanaey that incorporate water as a vital element. Other rituals not included in her book but discussed in interviews and recordings also highlight water use, such as *basabas*, *dasadas*, *sepyat*, and more. Doctolero (2021) notes that mainstream society often dismisses the Kankanaeys' rituals and belief systems, which label them paganism. Many educated individuals and families from the Cordillera peoples express that they have neglected and abandoned their cultural beliefs, leading to a sense of alienation from their heritage. Some educational and church institutions even reject cultural identity. A less informed perspective claims that these cultural beliefs and traditions are manifestations of evil. Consequently, many indigenous people feel confused and uncomfortable showcasing their practices and beliefs.

However, traditional forest management practices face various challenges and threats (Camacho et al., 2012). *Muyong* owners enhance depleted areas through enrichment planting but often rely on fast-growing exotic species due to the scarcity of native seedlings, risking biodiversity loss. Development projects have also led to inappropriate practices, such as clearing *muyong* forests for non-traditional uses. The Ifugao Rice Terraces, crucial for water management, are deteriorating due to inadequate site management and declining local interest. The *lapat* system in Abra faces threats from pilferage. Meanwhile, the *Ikalahans* have effectively used their traditional practices, such as terracing and composting, to manage and conserve forests despite past threats from land conversion (Camacho et al. 2012).

Rituals and Ceremonies: Integrating Spiritual Beliefs with Sustainable Practices

The Indigenous cosmology of the Cordillera in the Philippines is rooted in a profound understanding of the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm (Del Castillo et al., 2022). This worldview is reflected in the Cordilleran peoples' daily practices and environmental stewardship, who view the natural world as a living entity imbued with spiritual

significance.

For instance, Jacoba and Dubao (2022) presented the central role of the *emambunong* in the traditional culture of Benguet, particularly in Kabayan. The *emambunong* is deeply respected within the community as a mediator between the human and spiritual realms. Their role is integral to maintaining harmony and addressing transgressions involving spirits, especially during sacrificial rites. Spirits are seen as coexisting with the human community, particularly in sacred places such as Mount Pulag. This belief underscores the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual worlds in indigenous traditions, with the *emambunong* facilitating communication and ensuring the community's adherence to cultural and spiritual norms (Clemente 2002; Jacoba and Dubao 2022). For example, The Kankana-ey, Ifugao, Bontoc, and Tingguian peoples of the Cordillera share a deep spiritual connection to their land, with each group practicing sustainable traditions tied to the environment (Igorotage, n.d.; Aswang Project-2 2024). The Kankana-ey honor the spirits of mountains, rivers, and forests through rituals and agriculture. The Ifugao view their sacred rice terraces as a symbol of harmony with nature celebrated through rituals like the *Hudhud* epic (Igorotage, n.d.; Aswang Project-2 2024). The Bontoc and Tingguian also revere ancestral spirits in natural spaces, using ceremonies like the *Pechen* peace pact and *Gawīga* when myths to maintain harmony between the human and spiritual worlds (Igorotage, n.d.; Aswang Project-2 2024).

In Cordilleran cosmology, the natural world is deeply intertwined with the spiritual realm. Indigenous beliefs hold that humans, nature, and spirits are interconnected in a delicate balance. This interconnectedness is central to their environmental practices, where maintaining harmony with nature and its spirits is crucial. Indigenous groups believe that disrupting this balance can lead to ecological and spiritual consequences (Jacoba and Dubao 2022; Aswang Project 2018).

Essential spiritual beliefs guide these practices. For instance, ancestral spirits, known as *anito*, are revered as guardians of the land and its resources (Jacoba and Dubao, 2022). These spirits are believed to influence the community's well-

being, and maintaining a harmonious relationship with them is essential for prosperity (Igorotage, 2024; Jacoba and Dubao, 2022). Nature deities, associated with rivers, mountains, and forests, also play a significant role. Rituals and offerings honor these deities, ensuring their favor is retained and natural resources are used sustainably (Chunhabunyatip et al. 2018). For example, the dance rituals performed to honor spirits are integral to agricultural practices. During these ceremonies, offerings are made to appease the spirits and seek their blessings for a bountiful harvest. Such rituals reflect the deep spiritual connection between the Cordillerans and their environment, underscoring the role of spirituality in guiding environmental stewardship (Fiar-od 2021).

Syncretism in Beliefs and Practices

Syncretism in the Cordillera region showcases the merging of Indigenous beliefs with Christian teachings, resulting in a distinctive blend of spiritual practices. A prominent example of this syncretism is the combination of Christian rituals with indigenous ceremonies. For instance, the traditional Ifugao ritual that honors ancestral spirits, which includes offerings and prayers for a fruitful harvest, has been adapted to incorporate Christian prayers and hymns while preserving the essential spiritual intent of the ceremony (Igorotage 2024). Likewise, the influence of the Catholic church is evident in how indigenous communities observe Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter, often integrating indigenous symbols and practices, such as traditional dances or rituals, alongside Christian elements (Agbayani 1993).

Cordillera rituals, deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge and oral tradition, remain integral to the Igorots' daily lives, blending customary laws, ancestral practices, and Christian influences introduced during colonization. Rituals serve diverse purposes, from seeking blessings and expressing gratitude to appeasing spirits and fostering community solidarity. They often involve prayers, chants, animal sacrifices, and symbolic props like rice, fire, and carved figures to convey spiritual and environmental harmony. Elders or designated officiants, respected for their cultural knowledge and integrity, lead these ceremonies, reflecting moral values and practical customs, such as land

rights acquisition and conflict resolution. Despite modernization and migration affecting these practices, rituals significantly preserve cultural identity, environmental stewardship, and spiritual connection among Cordillera communities (Fiar-od 2021).

Implications and Challenges of Indigenous Environmental Stewardship

The increasing acknowledgment of Indigenous environmental practices underscores their significance for global ecological management, particularly in an accelerating climate crisis. Bennett et al. (2018) suggest that incorporating Indigenous knowledge into contemporary environmental strategies bolsters conservation and sustainable development efforts. Furthermore, Black and McBean (2016) emphasize that enhancing Indigenous involvement in environmental decision-making can improve health outcomes and conservation initiatives. By integrating Indigenous viewpoints, policies can become more inclusive and culturally attuned, promoting effective and equitable environmental management that leverages the deep ecological insights of these communities.

However, the Cordillera region faces significant challenges due to industrial activities like mining and deforestation, which threaten traditional practices and local ecosystems. Mining has led to land degradation, disrupted traditional agricultural and forest management systems, and caused soil erosion and water contamination, undermining Indigenous practices' sustainability (Camacho 2012; Timblique 2024;).

Additionally, external pressures from government policies and commercial interests often worsen these problems, placing economic development above environmental conservation and neglecting Indigenous land rights, further marginalizing these communities (Amnesty International 2024). In response, it is crucial to implement efforts to preserve Indigenous knowledge, such as educational programs and community-based initiatives, to revitalize traditional practices and incorporate them into modern environmental management (Laltoog 2024 2018; Mekonnen et al. 2022; Fiar-od 2021; Pappalardo 2020).

Reclaiming Cultural Identity

I would like to argue that securing land rights and enacting laws to regulate environmental degradation is no longer enough for ecological well-being. Restoring the spiritual and emotional ties between people and their land is crucial for the community to thrive. This task is both a religious and cultural challenge. The task must re-emphasize that Indigenous peoples worldwide should profoundly re-connect to their environment, viewing it as the foundation of their lives, spirituality, and cultural identity (Carling 2001). Indigenous worldview must, once again, re-emphasize collective coexistence, mutual respect, and cooperation, contrasting Western resource-centric approaches (Carling 2001).

Reclaiming the lost identity can also mean integrating Indigenous environmental practices with modern conservation. In this way, efforts to promote environmental preservation offer a promising approach to sustainable development in Cordillera. Developed over generations, Indigenous knowledge provides valuable insights into local ecosystems and sustainable resource management. For example, Ifugao's *muyong* system for managing forests surrounding rice terraces is an effective conservation practice that can complement contemporary approaches to forest and agricultural sustainability (Molintas 2004).

Moreover, collaboration between Indigenous communities, government agencies, and NGOs is crucial in blending traditional wisdom with scientific research, creating more effective conservation strategies (Pappalardo 2020). Reaffirming cultural identity through environmental stewardship is crucial for strengthening community resilience. Practices intertwined with cultural rituals, such as agricultural and forest management ceremonies, maintain a strong sense of identity and social cohesion (Laltoog 2024). Balancing tradition with modern challenges, such as climate change, further enhances the relevance of these practices in contemporary conservation (Mekonnen et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The indigenous beliefs and practices in the Cordillera play

a crucial role in environmental stewardship, showcasing a profound connection between people, nature, and the spiritual world. Traditional methods such as the *muyong* forest management system and sacred rituals associated with land and water emphasize sustainability and reverence for natural resources. However, the rise of modernization, industrialization, outside pressures, and greedy profit-oriented individuals threaten these practices.

It is now the time to realize that a significant opportunity exists to merge indigenous knowledge with contemporary conservation efforts, leading to more effective environmental strategies that honor cultural heritage. Collaboration among indigenous communities, policymakers, and NGOs is essential for this integration, ensuring that conservation policies are inclusive and impactful. It is not just a matter of an appeal, but rather, a categorical imperative that as we move forward, policymakers guarantee that the beliefs and the rights of Indigenous communities are upheld amid development. Similarly, Indigenous communities are to adopt a more critical stance on receiving the Christian faith, adopting its life-giving elements, and vehemently resisting all death-dealing elements. It is also essential to engage private and public academic institutions to create a curriculum to aid in preserving cultural heritage while addressing the challenges of the climate crisis. These are vital concerns for political, religious, and academic stakeholders. Additionally, it is an urgent call to all the Cordilleras to say enough to the oppressive systems and practices that slowly and gradually kill the life-giving elements of Indigenous beliefs and practices. In reclaiming the lost identity, one must resist all death-giving elements introduced by modernity and the selfish capitalist mentality. Nobody owns nature; we are nature. To destroy nature is to destroy ourselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Integrating Indigenous Knowledge with Contemporary Conservation Efforts:** There is an urgent need to blend indigenous ecological practices with modern conservation strategies. This integration will ensure that environmen-

tal policies are both effective and culturally respectful, leveraging the deep environmental wisdom inherent in Indigenous practices like the *muyong* forest management system.

2. **Collaborative Frameworks:** Policymakers, Indigenous communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must establish collaborative frameworks that respect and uphold Indigenous rights. This cooperation should focus on creating inclusive conservation strategies that reflect the values and practices of Indigenous peoples.
3. **Policy Advocacy:** Policymakers need to guarantee the protection of Indigenous rights in the face of development pressures. Legislation must prioritize the preservation of Indigenous beliefs and practices as integral to sustainable environmental management (Adlam 2021).
4. **Critical Reception of External Influences:** Indigenous communities should critically engage with external influences, particularly the adoption of Christianity. Embracing its positive elements while resisting those that undermine Indigenous values will foster a balanced and respectful cultural syncretism.
5. **Educational Curriculum Development:** Academic institutions should develop curricula that incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems, aiming to preserve cultural heritage and address contemporary environmental challenges. This approach will educate future generations on the importance of cultural and environmental stewardship.
6. **Community Mobilization:** Indigenous communities need to mobilize against oppressive systems and practices that threaten their traditional ways of life. Collective action is necessary to resist the detrimental impacts of modernization and capitalist exploitation on their cultural and environmental legacy.
7. **Environmental Awareness Campaigns:** Initiatives to raise awareness about the interconnectedness of humans and nature should be prioritized. These campaigns can help shift mindsets towards a more sustainable and respectful relationship with the environment.

8. Inclusive Development Models: Development models should be inclusive, ensuring that Indigenous voices are heard and respected. This inclusivity will promote development that is both sustainable and equitable, preserving the life-giving elements of Indigenous beliefs and practices.

These recommendations aim to foster a harmonious relationship between Indigenous cultural practices and modern environmental stewardship, ensuring the sustainability of both cultural heritage and natural resources. By respecting and integrating Indigenous knowledge, we can create a more sustainable future that honors and preserves the rich cultural legacy of the Cordillera.

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Research, Community Service, and Positionality: A Catholic Institution Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper talks about the importance of research in community service. But with an added element of positionality when doing research for community service. The author used the Divine Word College of Calapan – Community Extension Services Department as a point of reference as he navigates the issue mentioned above in concrete space and real-time. To highlight positionality, the author used the lens of "othering" from the perspectives of selected Postcolonial theorists as the situation of the Indigenous Peoples is being exposed, read, and analyzed. Methods used here are phenomenological experience, archival research with historical criticism, and self-reflexivity. This trajectory is intentionally done to give weight to the argument that positionality is necessary for doing research in Indigenous Peoples' communities for their liberation from discrimination and marginalization.

Keywords: Inclusion, peace and justice, reduced inequalities, Indigenous peoples, Mangyan

INTRODUCTION

With the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set by the United Nations, more and more institutions would like to participate in these goals. One of these is higher education institutions. In concrete, the venerable Divine Word College of Calapan (DWCC) sets its direction to these development goals through its office, the Community Extension Services (CES). DWCC crafts programs with specific projects to contribute to the materializa-

tion of the vision of the United Nations. Most of these programs are directed to the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) of Mindoro – the Mangyan.

The Mangyan is the generic name of all ethnic groups on the island of Mindoro. In Oriental Mindoro alone, it has 8 ethnic groups: Iraya (from Puerto Galera to some parts of Baco), Alangan (from some parts of Baco to some parts of Victoria), Tadyawan (from some parts of Naujan to Gloria), Buhid (from Bansud to Roxas), Taubuhid and Bangon (from some parts of Socorro to Bongabong), Hanunuo (from some parts of Roxas to Bulalacao) and Ratagnon in the southern part of Oriental Mindoro particularly near the border between Bulalacao and Mag-saysay, Occidental Mindoro.

It has been known that the Mangyans were the early settlers on the island of Mindoro. That is the reason why they are called Indigenous Peoples of Mindoro. Despite being the first inhabitants, they suffer from discrimination and marginalization. These states are undeniable even by mere observation as one gets into their communities. Although I am aware that more and more initiatives coming from the government and private agencies are redirected to the Mangyans, it is also undisputable that gaps are still observable and evident.

In this paper, I would like to highlight the importance of DWCC's involvement in the SDG as it focuses on the integral and sustainable development of the Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, particularly in Oriental Mindoro. Second, the importance of the utilization of research as a significant tool of DWCC's CES and its different schools as they engage and participate in the development of the Mangyan communities.

I used descriptive narrative as my methodology with phenomenological experience from my decades of countless immersions, archival research, which gives space for historical criticism, and self-reflexivity as my methods. My frame of reading the reality of the Mangyan is liberative. This employs Postcolonial theories, especially the thoughts of Jacques Lacan, Edward Said, and Gaytri Spivak. I believe their stances can facilitate our presentation of the Mangyans not as "others" but as persons with equal dignity, leading to our aspiration for social equity.

I will begin this paper with a presentation of the current scenario of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the Philippines. This exposition may appear general in scope, yet the realities presented undeniably give us a glimpse of the Mangyans of Mindoro since the plight of the Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines is almost similar throughout the archipelago. I will then present my critical reading on the matter. This is followed by some proposals on how, as students, faculty, and staff of DWCC, we can proceed with researching to aid in the eradication, if not reduction, of the discrimination and marginalization of the Indigenous Peoples in general and the Mangyans in our province in particular. I do not claim these proposals to be long-standing. But I firmly believe these can help us see and understand better the Indigenous Peoples, particularly the Mangyans in our province.

A. Kumusta ang mga Katutubo sa Pilipinas: A Glimpse of the Current State

According to the genetic survey, there are over 170 ethnic groups in the entire archipelago (Delfin 2011). While in the mapping of the IPs done by PANLIPI, a Legal Assistance Center for Indigenous Filipinos, and the Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (ECIP), an armed wing of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, there are about 110 ethnolinguistic groups in the country (ECIP-PANLIPI 2017). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), they are mainly concentrated in Northern Luzon (Cordillera Administrative Region, 33%) and Mindanao (61%), with some groups in the Visayas area (UNDP 2010). The latest data from the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), which is based in Copenhagen, Denmark, informed that the "Indigenous Peoples" in the Philippines are about 10-20 percent of the 102.9 million population (IWGIA 2019). But how are they now? What is their status?

In 1991, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines underscored the Indigenous Peoples as one of the primary sectors in the country that needed attention and assistance (CBCP 1992). In 2010, almost two decades after the pronouncement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the United Nations Development Programme

(2010) announced that the "IPs make fully one-third of the world's poorest peoples, suffer disproportionately in areas like health, education, and human rights, and regularly face systemic discrimination and exclusion." It adjoined that in the Philippines, "IPs have been subject to historical discrimination and marginalization from political processes and economic benefit" (Ibid.). In 2012, two years after the report of the UNDP, Cariño (2012) presented similar findings on the status of the Indigenous Peoples in the country as among the poorest and most marginalized sectors. The reason, according to her, is the neglect and discrimination in the provision of basic social services by the Government. "[T]he lack of budget has resulted in generally poorer living conditions and higher incidence of poverty in regions where indigenous peoples are found or concentrated" (Ibid.).

It is noteworthy to point out that in the past two decades, from PCP II to UNDP to Cariño's report, nothing seems to have happened on a bigger and larger scale for the upliftment of the condition of the Indigenous Peoples except for the promulgation of R.A. 8371 which is popularly known as the IPRA of 1997 or Indigenous Peoples' Rights Acts. This law has helped shape the direction of the Indigenous People's community in the country. Famous to this law are the 4 bundles of rights, namely: rights to ancestral domains, rights to self-governance and empowerment, rights to social justice and human rights, and rights to cultural integrity.

However, even after the promulgation of this law, the rectification for the alleviation of the conditions of the IPs is still dragging and slow. A good case to prove this, from the ancestral domain side, is the awarding of the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) to IP communities. In Oriental Mindoro alone, it was only in 2022, 25 years after the promulgation of the IPRA, that the Tadyawan and TauBuid IP communities in Pinalayan and Gloria received their CADT (NCIP 2022). Also, this was the first CADT awarded in Oriental Mindoro. I did not say here that nothing has been done to process their needs. What I

intend in this pronouncement is that there are vivid gaps where we can enter and help speed the process for the reduction, if not eradication, of discrimination and marginalization of the Indigenous Peoples as a leading higher institution in the province. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), if they are to stand alone in securing, delineating, and titling the ancestral domains, is not enough as a body because there are many documents to accomplish to support that certain areas are truly ancestral domains. This entails a lot of documentation and research. Needless to say, financial concerns.

In the domain of health, Cariño (2012) highlighted in her report that "[T]he general health situation in regions and provinces with the largest concentrations of indigenous peoples is below the national average... It was found that the infant mortality rate and the maternal mortality rate were high for the Lumads of southern Mindanao. Health and nutrition problems, which should be preventable and treatable, continue to persist. This is due to the continued absence or lack of basic health personnel, facilities, resources, and information in these extremely poor upland groups". In 2022, ten years after the report of Cariño, some of her pronouncements are still prevalent, as found in the study made by Duante, Austria, et al. (2022). From their research, they discovered that "compared with the non-IP individuals and households – the IP population was poorer; had a significantly higher prevalence of undernutrition and iodine deficiency, and had lower adequacy of energy and other nutrient intakes." So, they recommended that "culturally sensitive and appropriate interventions should be formulated to improve IP's nutrition and health status in the country" (Ibid.).

Another burdensome concern in the IP communities is the perpetuation of militarization. This is evident from their narratives. On April 19, 2018, it was reported that "Philippine military battalions closed in, shutting down schools, rounding up men and harassing women" in Madaum, Tagum City (Chandran 2018). The elder of the IP community, "Tungig Mansumuy, had to make a tough decision: stay and protect their homes or flee to save their lives and risk losing their land" (Ibid.). The incursions of armed men in the IP communities are due to the suspicion of their involvement with militant groups (Ibid.). Related to this

concern is the weaponization of the IP communities by the revolutionaries. They use the IPs and their concerns, such as their ancestral domain, as their weapon to take a firm hold on the IP communities.

There is also another tendency to use the issue of insurgency to weaponize it as a mechanism of control to the IP community, especially those communities that are resisting aggressive development like watersheds turned into dams, sacred mountains into mining sites, or ancestral domains turned into ranches or tourist destinations such as golf courses and the likes. The Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (ECIP 2020) has listed some examples in this regard: 1) the Kaliwa Dam will inundate communities, displace and socially dislocate the Agta and Remontado in the provinces of Quezon and Rizal; 2. The construction of the Sta. Clara Hydro Electric Plant is also considered against the interest and welfare of the Alangan Mangyans of Oriental Mindoro; 3. The almost 10,000-hectare New Clark City Project is displacing many Aytas in the province of Tarlac; and 4. Massive resort development for tourists in the province of Palawan caused the illegal buying and selling of the ancestral lands of the Tagbanua people.

With the mechanisms of militarization and weaponization, IPs were displaced and forced into diaspora, leaving their ancestral lands, which is very important to their existence as IPs. For them, their land is their life, and everything in their ancestral domain is an expression of their identity as indigenous and as a person. These mechanisms of control further intensify the discrimination and marginalization of the Indigenous Peoples in our lands. Because of these, it forced some of the IPs, especially the young, to the allurements of the city. "Their desires to become part of wider society has generated many identity struggles and feelings of disconnect between older and younger individuals, leading to increased communal tension" (ECIP 2009), and consequently, the younger members are losing their cultural identity, leaving them in a crisis of identity and for some, they give up their unique culture for the mainstream civilization.

In 2021, Amnesty International made a public statement to end attacks against Indigenous Peoples (2021). And in 2022, ECIP (2022) did the same.

Meanwhile, in the education sector, the ECIP (2009) launched a study on education and discovered that mainstream education is alienating IP learners. Based on their consolidated findings, the mainstream school for IP learners is a venue of discrimination they experienced in mainstream schools as non-being. That discussion in mainstream schools is limited to surface culture. In this same consolidated report, the overall impact of mainstream education at the individual level is alienation from their communities, heritage, culture, and history. In 2011, two years after, the Department of Education (DepEd) released a DepEd executive order (no. 62) on "Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education Policy Framework". This executive order recognizes education as a necessary means to realize other human rights and fundamental freedom; hence, DepEd urges the strengthening of its IP policy on IP education and the development and implementation of an IP Education Program (DepEd 2011). It also recognizes that "a major factor contributing to their disadvantaged position is the lack of access to culture-responsive basic education (Ibid.) In 2016, DepEd again released an executive order (no. 22) on "Implementing Guidelines on the Allocation and Utilization of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program Support Fund for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 (DepEd 2016).

In the same year as the pronouncement of EO no. 22, DepEd released another order. This order (no. 50) is on the "Hiring Guidelines for Teacher I Positions in School Implementing Indigenous Peoples Education Effective School Year 2016-2017". Despite the rationale of this order, that education should be contextual, culture responsive, and a mother tongue-based medium of instruction, it does not outrightly state that a professional licensed IP teacher deserves a straight-away appointment. It did not also state that a professional licensed IP teacher is the preferred individual for hiring. For this reason, anyone as long as the candidate is a bonafide resident "for at least six (6) months at the barangay, municipality, city or province in which the school being applied to for a teaching position is locat-

ed" (DepEd 2016) is considered a bonafide applicant. But if we review the rationale behind this order, it would outrightly tell us that the most suitable applicant for the Teacher I position would be an IP-registered professional teacher. Interestingly, this same DepEd order states that "[T]he recognized IP customary elders/leaders where the school is located shall be consulted by the committee to verify and better assess applications," making the hiring process more IP leaning. But again, this is not always the case in reality.

Coincidentally, in the same year, Cornelio and de Castro (2016) evaluated the state of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) in the Philippines and concluded that:

[A]s a collective endeavor; however, the progress of indigenous education has been considerably sluggish. Policies concerning indigenous education, for example, are fairly recent, and their implementation has yet to be seen and tested. Tasked to coordinate all efforts at Indigenous education, IPSeO has just been recently established as well. In communities, local schools set up by indigenous leaders in partnership with NGOs and religious organizations have encountered difficulties with government bureaucracies insofar as national standards are concerned. Some of these local schools are also handicapped by their financial inadequacies.

In 2021, a doctoral student from the University of San Agustin in Iloilo City made a dissertation on the "Integration of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) in Cabacanan Elementary School: Basis for Enhancement of the Program" and concluded that "[A]mong the problems experienced in implementing IP Education were: teachers have limited ideas in integrating IP concepts in their classes, less appreciation of superiors on the capacity of teachers, and shift of values of the present generation of children" (Alingasa 2021). These problems are not shocking at all. As a matter of fact, logic would say that it is highly probable that "teachers have limited ideas in integrating IP concepts in their classes" because teachers sent to IP schools are not IP themselves. So, how can an outsider handily integrate culture

into her teaching when the IP culture is foreign to her? Alingasa suggests then for improvement of the IP Education Program the following: more training in IP Education for teachers; provision of learning materials on IPEd; use of available media and technology to supplement teaching strategies; retrieval or recording of IP literature from culture bearers or elders; and creation of a school for living traditions" (Ibid.). But who would provide the learning materials on IPEd, given the fact that Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines are not monolithic? Last October 12, 2024, the bill on mother tongue as a medium of instruction in K-3 lapsed into law (Abad, 2024). Hence, this fresh narrative paints a clear picture of the status of IPEd in the country.

What is of great concern now is if mainstream education in K-12 continues to prevail and if the hiring of teachers continues as is, the alienation of IP learners from their rootedness to their culture will continue to tear their unique identity. The issue of "othering" will continue to instill great havoc.

In all, something must have to be done to all of these "otherings."

B. Pagbubukod-bukod ng etnisidad sa Pilipinas: Indigenous Peoples as "others"

In the first segment, I exposed various strands of discrimination and marginalization in the Indigenous Peoples, not excluding our indigenous in the province. These are sharp testaments that the status of the IPs in the country is horrible. Despite these, I see rays of hope. But before we proceed to these prospects, I would like to trace the commencement of discrimination and marginalization to the IPs. If Cariño (2012) argues that discrimination and marginalization are historical, then when did these begin?

In the book of Francia (2013), the third chapter bears the title "From Indio to Filipino: Emergence of a Nation, 1862-1898". It exposes how the Spaniards address every settler in the archipelago as Indios. Disparaging the term may be, according to Francia (Ibid), it also depicts the real scenario of the early inhabitants in the archipelago.

Prior to Spanish colonization, the dwellers in the archipelago lived as a community with their own political and social structures, modes of economic transactions, and cultural expressions, including knowledge, practices, and systems. These structures, modes, expressions, practices, and systems govern their respective ethnic communities. It was in the dawn of the invasion of the colonials that these ethnic communities scattered all over the islands were lumped and ascribed as Filipinos. However, as the different ethnic communities were gathered at the center through *reduccion*, other ethnic communities refused the integration process. Instead, they retreated away from the *cabeza* as their resistance to the imposition of the *conquistadores*, including the introduction of the foreign faith. The famous accounts of these resistances are portrayed in the novels of Dr. Jose Rizal. However, Schumacher (1979) and Fernandez (1988), without deleting the narratives of abuses of some ministers, argued that many Filipinos during the colonization period were generally satisfied by the governance of the missionaries. These archival findings reverberate in the documents gathered by Postma (1985) on the early encounters of the Mangyans with the early missionaries. The Mangyans were in great hope to re-encounter the missionaries who shepherded them because of their benevolence.

However, there are also other narratives of resistance from the early missionaries from other ethnic communities, especially in Mindanao (Gaspar 2021) and Luzon (Salgado 1994), even among the native clergy (Uy 2024). I will not go through its details. Suffice it to say, for now, that there are two existing and valid narratives. One is that Indios warmly accommodated the early missionaries, and the other narrative is of resistance. Apart from this, what could be the reason for the segregation of the IPs from the lowland Filipinos, and what influential factors could have possibly contributed to its intensification, leading to stark discrimination and marginalization of the IPs?

Surely, it all began with the conquest. The Spanish colonizers launched the Regalia Doctrine, declaring that the entire archipelago was under the King of Spain (Hirai 2015). This imposition not only disturbed the independent ethnic communities but also paved the way for the greater divide. Some ethnic com-

munities were able to "defend their territories and evade the colonizers, maintaining their relative independence while continuing to practice their systems and ways of life" (Cariño 2012), while others submitted to the colonial subjugation. In this period, the recently lumped-up Filipinos were a group of people being divided into the colonized lowlanders and the uncolonized Filipinos. This glaring split later evolved into a distinction between the majority Filipinos, the ones who were colonized, and the minority, the ones who resisted and withdrew to remote and inaccessible places, who were later called the "Indigenous Peoples" (Ibid.).

When the Spanish *conquistadores* left the archipelago, the disparaging scenario of the great divide was perpetuated by the Americans. They embarked on politico-military as well as economic and cultural measures, with education as the prime bait to advance the subjugation of the defiant IPs. Those lured were integrated into the political structure that the Americans intended as a mechanism of control (Hirai 2015). To further their hegemonic domination against the resisting "Indigenous Peoples," the Americans created laws that tampered with and put in peril the IPs' ownership of their ancestral lands, such as 1) the Philippine Commission Act No. 178 of 1903 that states, "all unregistered lands became part of public domain"; 2) Mining Law of 1905 (Acquisition of public lands by Americans for mining purpose); and 3) Public Land Acts of 1913, 1919, and 1925. Mindanao island and all other fertile lands, the current rulers considered unoccupied and unreserved, hence free and available for titling and ownership. While the unappropriated public lands, the colonials considered homesteaders and corporations ejecting and driving away the original IP settlers. Despite the cries and wails of the IPs for the pervasive and heartless land grabbing, the colonizers did not listen. In these situations, the concept of land ownership and its use continued. This has been the status quo even after the postcolonial period (Ibid.). It continues to be observed and practiced, even today. Lowlander Filipinos grabbed the lands that the ancestors of the Indigenous Peoples owned, according to their customary laws, and tilled, according to their indigenous knowledge and practices. Hence, the previous laws enacted by the colonials were carried out by the suc-

ceeding government in our lands, thus sustaining discrimination and marginalization. Without a doubt, this perpetuated the harsh "othering" of the Indigenous Peoples.

One of the early prominent thinkers who explored and studied extensively the concept of "othering" is Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). She employed this concept in her analysis of the status of women. She made it the foundation for her theory of gender (Beauvior 1953, McWeeney 2009-2010). She is heavily influenced by Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic (Brons 2015).

In the turn of the 20th-century French philosophy, the concept of "Othering" became a postcolonial theory which is "defined as a process in which, through discursive practices, different subjects are formed, hegemonic subjects – that is, subjects in powerful social relations as well as those subjugated to these powerful conditions (Thomas-Olalde and Velho 2011). "Othering denotes simultaneously both the features of discourse structures and processes and the formation of subjectivity engendered by such discourse" (Ibid.). In the case of the Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, the many discursive practices like the enactment of laws detrimental to the IPs that favor the colonialists and even of the selfish land grabbing made by the immigrant Filipino lowlanders are clear forms of "othering." The IPs were being driven away because a louder and stronger narrative was at the fore.

Another influential French philosopher on "othering," Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), took Freud's psychoanalysis and conceptualized his concept of the "big Other," which can be understood as "radically other and includes both other subjects and the (institutionalized) relationships between the self and those others" (Brons 2015). Lacan's focus here is the development of the subject and its identity, which, for him, the self is understood and considered as a continuous 'dynamic reflection' in interaction with the environment, making "a new reading of the unconscious which in his view was organized like a language – 'as a discourse of the Other'" (Thomas-Olalde and Velho 2011). In this trajectory, being dependent on others develops "as one that is alienated, dependent on the opposite person" (Ibid., Rivkin and Ryan, 1998). With the repetitive discourses and cyclic

discursive practices of discrimination and marginalization as exposed above, Indigenous Peoples felt as non-being (ECIP 2009). They are being alienated from their cultural identity and even made outsiders of their ancestral lands.

Edward Said (1935-2003), a Palestinian-American philosopher and political activist, is also a leading thinker on the concept of "othering" (Said 2000). He "analyses the discursive practices which produce 'the Orient' and 'the Oriental' and positions them in a constitutive relationship with the self-image of the 'West'" (Thomas-Olalde and Velho 2011). This "othering" constructs certain practices of knowledge production that legitimize domination, and this hegemonic intention results in epistemological practices that appear plausible and useful (Ibid.). The incursions of mining and development aggression in the ancestral lands of the Indigenous Peoples in the name of community development and royalty, as proposed by the proponents yet forcefully imposed on them, is a clear expression of a hegemonic action with the intention of making these destructive incursions look viable, agreeable, and valid. Even without going through the process of free, prior, and informed consent, these proponents allure the Indigenous Peoples by sharing with them stories of development made by other aggressors in other ancestral lands to make the project believable and appear beneficial to them. These thoughts bring us to another theorist on "othering," Gayatri C. Spivak (1942 -), an Indian scholar.

She points out that engendering hegemonic knowledge to the "natives" by the colonial masters, which results in control, is a form of "othering." The information and knowledge brought by the development aggressors to the IP communities, which replace and, most of the time, being pushed forcefully to invalidate their Indigenous knowledge, practices, and systems, is, unarguably, a form of "othering."

From all of these expositions of "othering," where shall DWCC-CES head?

C. Saan patungo si DWCC-CES: Prospects from the Musing

Divine Word College of Calapan envisions extending its presence not only to be the prime institution of higher learning in the MIMAROPA region but also to mold its students to be globally competitive but with a big heart for community service. Hence, to align with this trajectory, DWCC-CES crafts programs with specific projects in the province of Oriental Mindoro with the mind of impacting the world through their implementation ability and innovations. These services may be considered minute because of their locations. Still, we cannot also deny the fact that these programs fill certain iotas in the SGD of the UN, thus contributing to making the world a better place to live in. Aside from the urban poor communities that DWCC-CES is serving, the Mangyan communities are shortlisted. DWCC-CES forges its energy and positions itself as a committed partner in the development of Mangyan. It aspires to build sustainable, resilient, and integral communities. However, DWCC-CES seges from the traditional approach of building and organizing communities. It desires that all its projects under CES should be research-based.

Gone were the days when we visited and came to the area and imposed on the community what we wanted to happen for them. Now, we want them to speak for themselves. And we want these data to be placed scientifically. But how are we going to do this? Here, I will not propose methodology and methods except that I would pin down the idea that embracing solely a positivist approach does not guarantee that it speaks the whole reality, that numbers speak the whole truth. This is similar to the pleading of Gariguez (2024) in his paper, "Qualitative Method and Freire's Dialogic Approach in the Conduct of Research among the Indigenous Peoples," which he presented at the International Conference organized by the Philippine Sociological Society in Caraga State University, Butuan City, Philippines. He argued that scientific objectivity expressed in numbers "has an inherent limitation in its potential to measure the non-physical phenomena" (Ibid.). Even leading researchers agree with this, as they articulated that although positivistic approaches are necessary, they are not adequate in providing all the queries about nature and humanity (Knudston and Suzuki 2008). So, here are some proposals I crafted for the perusal of neophyte researchers in

doing research in the IP communities. These thoughts do not pertain to methodology and methods but to positionality. Our position is equally important in doing research in IP communities. This can also help in deciphering the suitable methodology and methods to be employed in doing research.

1. “Leave your sandals behind when you enter into an Indigenous Peoples’ territory.” Moses did this when he entered the place where the burning bush took place (Ex. 3). He did so because he knew that he was stepping into a territory not of his own. He also knew that before he arrived there, everything was.

In our pursuit of research, we leave our prejudices behind to accommodate the “other.” This process of accommodation entails the process of adaptation to the ways of the “other.” In the long run, these processes, when consistently and piously done, will end up in an interiorization (sharing of *loob*), which will bring us in a similar position with the “other.” At this stage, researchers become more reliable and credible to present the psyche of the Indigenous Peoples. Although it is undeniable that non-IP researchers will never be one with their psyche. Still, at least, we become closer to their perception of their identities, realities, and sensibilities. Unless we do this, we will never be successful in our pursuit. We may be able to write well, but we will never represent the IPs in a better position and standing lest lobby their communal aspirations and needs.

2. “Stop comparing! IPs have IKSP!”

The greatest hindrance for researchers doing research in IP communities, as mentioned above, is personal prejudices shaped by the Western ways of looking at realities that we got from our education and various media. Suppose we cannot leave behind these biases. In that case, this is the consequence: we will start comparing and looking for what we have with what the IPs do not have, how we do things differently, or how IPs perceive realities with how we perceive these. And so on.

Instead of magnifying the differences, we should focus on asking ourselves: why do IPs do these things and perceive realities as such, independent of our own experiences and unattached to our own operative worldviews influenced by colonial

categories? These queries will facilitate a closer gaze at the phenomenon in front of us, which can help us discover the substratum of all these appearances and bring us a closer understanding of the Indigenous Peoples' worldviews. These worldviews are their indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices (IKSP), which are, beyond doubt, particular to them, which make them different from any other group in the entire human race.

With this reality, how valid and acceptable is it to compare a certain group to another in a demeaning position? Can we, instead, recognize their differences as part of the whole narrative of a colorful, intriguing humanity? Without recognizing the IKSP of the Indigenous Peoples, the researchers will remain fixated on binaries and extreme poles. More dangerous is their perpetuation of the detrimental "othering."

3. "IPs are not objects for research per se."

IPs are not entities for research per se as they are not also objects for touristic activities. It is common to hear among "outsiders" their dream of going to Baguio or Banaue to see the Igorots and to have pictures with them as souvenirs. Those whose dreams were realized proudly post their pictures on their Facebook or videos on reels with their wide grins while donning traditional headdresses and proudly wearing traditional garbs. Unfortunately, on their posts, they do not even know that people in Baguio and Banaue are addressed differently because they belong to two distinct ethnic groups with a culture and language of their own.

There are also some Mindoreños inviting guests and tourists in their provinces to see for real and make reels on the Mangyans. Facebook is flooded with vloggers visiting Mangyan communities, making content in the guise of giving *ayuda*. Clearly, the content is to evoke followers to donate and support them because of their "cause." Unfortunately, what they thought of as a "cause" is adding harsh misrepresentations of the Mangyans, which intensifies the one-sided representations of the Mangyans. In this instance, the Mangyan as the "other" is bolstered.

Doing research on IPs solely for the intention of personal interest is not commendable. It is very egotistical, even unethical. Researchers should keep in mind that researching Indigenous Peoples is not only for academic purposes but geared towards their integral development, for the betterment of their lives, and the attainment of social and economic equity. It should be purpose-driven, that is, to assist them in attaining their dreams and aspirations as a community. Researchers should make studies to help alleviate the lives of the IPs, support their causes, and help process and systematize their knowledge, practices, and systems for better ascription, self-ascription, and definition of their ethnic identity. Finally, to better understand them and properly represent them.

5. “Let them validate it.”

There had been many studies in the past on the Indigenous Peoples that brought wounds rather than healings, that instilled division rather than unity, that created more marginalizations than being gathered as one and valued the same. Most of these studies are papers that used lenses from the Orient, standards, and tools from the West, as well as perspectives from the colonials.

A neophyte researcher must consider this point before embarking on the field. He should carefully choose his theoretical lenses as well as the methodology and methods to be used. As I expressed above, these are very critical parts if one wants to show the world the innate brilliance of the IPs, help voice their unvoiced sentiments, and sing the unsung wisdom that the IPs have for the world to appreciate and learn from them.

However, prior to showing the world what IPs have and who they really are, studies made on them should be checked and validated, especially by their elders, the bearers of their wisdom, and guardians of their traditions. They are the last ones to confirm if the studies truly represent their identities and aspirations.

Never skip this stage!

5. “It’s not your sole property; it’s theirs too!”

When everything is done and the paper is ready for submission, always remember that the papers you are holding are not solely yours but owned by the many voices of individuals in the community. Always remember that researchers only extract information and abstract realities and experiences from them. Researchers act only as systematizers for indigenous knowledge, practices, and systems. The real owners of these are still the Indigenous Peoples.

Researchers also act as processors for realities and phenomena intertwined with their cultural wisdom and practices for the acquisition of better perspectives and profound comprehension of their community profile and dynamics. Clearly, the knowledge extracted here is not only a product of self-reflexivity by the researchers but also from the innate psyche of Indigenous Peoples’.

Thus, the researcher is not the sole proprietor of the research output. It’s theirs, too!

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

DWCC-CES gears towards research. This is not for research’s sake but for nation-building and as our way of contributing to the fulfillment of the UN’s SDG in a worldwide scheme. CES advocates research at the service for “others,” especially the Mangyans of Oriental Mindoro. With the proposed positionality in doing research, CES hopes to achieve the following:

1. Proper *(re)presentation* of the Mangyans and eventually for an apt *(re)construction* of their identities, not as “others” but as one of us.
2. Ease out *marginalization* of the Mangyans and foster *inclusion* for integral and sustainable development.
3. Impede the *annihilation* of their Indigenous identity, knowledge, systems, and practices and replace them with *celebrations and recognitions* in the mainstream sphere and spaces.

In all, for their liberation from discrimination.

I want to recommend for further reading and consultation the document of the NCIP Administrative Order no. 1, series of 2012: “The Indigenous Knowledge, Systems, and Practices (IKSPs) and Customary Laws (CLs) Research and Documentation Guidelines of 2012” for full details on the procedures of doing research in IP Communities.

Again, may our pursuit always be for the liberation of the discriminated and marginalized “other”! May it bring fulfillment to inclusive and sustainable community development!

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Preserving Cultural Traditions Among Ifugao Migrants: A Path to Sustainable Local Tourism in Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Institutions have techniques for promoting their tourism industry. Tourism is usually attached to relaxation through visual appreciation of nature in eco-tourism and cultural immersion. With the advent of globalization, our environment and culture are in peril, and so is the tourism industry. Thus, with the promotion of local tourism in mind, the researchers investigated whether Ifugao migrants still practice their cultural traditions, specifically their dances and music, delicacies, handicrafts, and costumes. The researchers used qualitative methods to gather data through phenomenological observation, interviews, focus group discussions, and photo documentation. The first and second-generation Ifugao migrants served as participants in the study. The study revealed that Ifugao migrants in Villa Aurora and Villa Florentino, Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya occasionally practice their dance and music, make their delicacies and even their handicraft but is limited only to the use of bamboo as material due to lack of rattan, and they also wear their traditional costumes on special occasions. The death of elders, their work on their farms, education of the young, moderniza-

tion, religion, and intermarriages hinder the practice of their traditions. However, they considered weddings, school programs, fiestas, and cultural competitions to be enablers that helped in the practice and preservation of their culture and traditions. An opportunity to conserve their cultural traditions is for them to be organized as cultural performers as additional tourist attractions at the Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park in Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, which is just adjacent to the research locale of Villa Aurora and Florentino.

Keywords: Ifugao cultural practices, hindrances of cultural practices, enablers of cultural practices, ecological tourism, cultural tourism

INTRODUCTION

"Tourism is often seen as a global phenomenon with an almost incomprehensibly massive infrastructure. Its importance is evident from the fact that its influence thoroughly penetrates society, politics, culture, and above all, the economy (Gyr, 2010)." He further described tourism today as highly "globalized." History and globalization have shown the potential of the tourism industry. People could move easily from one place to another, not to mention one country to another, and see different kinds of places and people.

Furthermore, tourism is one of the world's most important industries and creates millions of jobs. At present, more than 900 million times a year, someone travels to another country. There is a need to diversify local tourism beyond wildlife by focusing on cultural tourism. Kietumetse (2007) asserted that Indigenous tourism is already taking place in the region, that some of the challenges of cultural tourism are a lack of business, and that "tourism is more than traditional dance and crafts." However, Dulawan (2014) states that "tourism could be a means to conserve culture." This is the conclusion of her investigation of the status, problems, and concerns of the Ifugao rice terraces tourism in the Philippines.

Culture plays an important role in tourism and has a promotional strategy to market the sector abroad. Kalifungwa

(2004) defined culture in terms of art and music, dance, folklore, and performing visual arts, which are integral parts of tourism. The government emphasized the development of culture as a tourism product. The Philippines is a place of so many cultures. One of the many cultural groups in the northern part is the Ifugaos.

There seems to be a connection between tourism and culture. This is evident in the definition given by the International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism (ICOMOS, 1997), which defined cultural tourism as "that activity which enables people to experience the different ways of life of other people, thereby gaining a first-hand understanding of their customs, traditions, the physical environment, the intellectual ideas and those places of architectural, historical, archeological or other cultural significance which remain from earlier times. Cultural tourism differs from recreational tourism in that it seeks to gain an understanding or appreciation of the nature of the place being visited. From the long definition, one could surmise that cultural tourism could include many areas, such as heritage tourism, ethnic tourism, events, and festival tourism. All of these tourism classifications are connected to the culture of the place or locality.

Tourism about culture can be subdivided into themes, like tourism in culture and the environment or religious traditions. According to Gregs (1996), as cited by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2009), theme-based tourism is popular in diversifying and increasing local territories' attractiveness. One good example is the "Temple Stay Program" in the Republic of Korea, where tourists were asked to stay at the Buddhist temple for a few days of immersion. This temple stay program was designed to help people understand Korean Buddhism better. Buddhist monks' culture and traditional practices are very appealing to many foreigners (OECD, 2009).

Ballo (2011) claims that cultural tourism began to be recognized as a distinct product category in the late 1970s when tourism marketers and tourism researchers realized that some people traveled specifically to gain a deeper understanding of the culture or heritage of a destination (Tighe, 1986). In most regions

of the world, particularly in Europe and North America, cultural attractions have become important in tourism development. At the global level, cultural attractions are usually perceived as icons of important global culture streams (Richards, 2009). According to recent changes in tourism trends, it is observable that tourists are more bent on cultural activities than before. This is supported by Richards (2009), who said that in the twentieth century, tourism and culture contributed to cultural tourism's growth and development, which became an area for development in most countries. Unfortunately, in developing countries where much of the earth's magnificent heritage is located, preserving this heritage is very difficult because many challenges in the developing world often thwart conservation objectives.

In the Philippines, foreign or local tourists go around the country to see the beauty of our ecological and cultural diversity. This is evident in many festivals done in the different parts of our country, like the *Ati-atihan* festival of Kalibo, Aklan, *Dinagyang* festival of Iloilo City, *Panagbenga* of Baguio City, *Panagyaman* of Nueva Vizcaya, the unity festival for the different tribes of Nueva Vizcaya and others that showcase the richness of local culture. The northern part of our country has natural scenic views and rich cultural and traditional practices. Banaue Rice Terraces, for instance, is a witness to the richness of Ifugao culture. Added to the different aspects of their culture are their dances and music, handicrafts, delicacies, and costumes, which spice up the richness of the Ifugao culture.

However, it is observed that many Ifugaos have migrated to different parts of the country. According to Dulawan (2015), there has been a "steady out-migration of hundreds of families to Quirino, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya provinces, and Baguio City." According to a study, there were even Ifugao migrants in and around the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park (Cagayan Valley Program on Environmental Development, 2007). There could be some reasons for the steady migration of Ifugaos to other provinces. In a study by McKay (2005), he found out that the Ifugao family's economic security remains a priority such that any effort to "sustain their agricultural landscapes will only succeed if and when their economic needs are met." He further discovered that people wonder if the tourism development planned for the

terraces can fill the gap they experienced between the tourism industry and their lives. This is one of the reasons why Ifugaos migrated to other provinces to look for more viable lands. Ifugaos' livelihood can no longer be considered pure subsistence (McKay, 2005), meaning they need more for their families and themselves.

With the Philippine government's intensified program of safeguarding cultural heritage, Peralta (2007) said that there can be strategies to do this and some of them are: 1) intensify ethnic pride regarding one's culture, 2) increase and propagate the depth of knowledge among incoming generations, 3) institutionalize the safeguarding efforts from national to local levels, 4) provide socially relevant context for the practice of intangible heritage, and 5) provide continuing program of incentives for practitioners and teachers (cash or trophies).

There seems then a need to look into the tourism potential of the cultural traditions and practices of Ifugao migrants. This is because, according to Richards (2009), tourists nowadays are mostly attracted to places that are less visited and those that showcase their local culture. It further found out that tourists desire to experience local cultures, even to the extent of living with the local community.

If, in the past, tourists were interested only in 4s of tourism (the sun, sand, sea, and sex), there is a new change in tourism trends for more and more people are now more inclined to see cultural activities. One important motivation for visiting a tourist site is to have diverse experiences (Csapo & Matesz, 2007). According to Berki (2004), the interest in cultural tourism can be due to some phenomenal experiences in our social life. Media participation in introducing heritage sites, festivals, and other cultural events could be one of the strongest factors.

Studies related to cultural tourism are the studies of Parry (2000) in Australia and Canada, where she examined how these groups represent their culture and how they have become established as an indigenous tourism operator. Moua (2008) stated that preserving the cultural legacies of a group of Indigenous people is important, especially if the cultural practices and traditions are already practiced for thousands of years. Preserving

cultural traditions and practices helps document and communicate cultural heritage and attracts other resources across the dominant society. The study of Moua (2008) explored how the Mong leaders maintained and preserved their cultural traditions. The result of the study suggested that the cultural traditions or practices will be preserved through the efforts and concerns of the people within that tradition and as the Mong people adjust to the mainstream society of America. Ho (2008) explored the underlying cause of sustainable cultural tourism. The study confirmed the possibility of satiating "various stakeholders, namely: tourism, cultural heritage management, asset owners and local community, in developing heritage sites as sustainable cultural tourist attractions." Yuson (2000) described the spectacular rice terraces of the Philippines to preserve the culture of those who created them. Acabado (2012) explored the relationship between irrigation management and the social organization of the Ifugao in the Northern Philippines and found out that the social structure is one factor that sustains the Ifugao agriculture. The study by Milgram (1997) analyzed the shifts in production and trade relations with the commercialization of the craft industry in Banaue, Ifugao, and Northern Philippines. With a focus on women and weaving, it examines the significance of crafts (weaving, woodcarving, and basketry) as a source of income and accumulation for both artisans and traders and with the relations that evolved between these two groups with the commoditization of rural economy.

One may ask, who are the Ifugaos? What can they offer to the tourism industry? According to Dulawan (2015), the people called themselves *Ipugo*, which is derived from *Pugaw*, meaning earth world. *Ipugo*, altered to Ifugao by outsiders, literally means earth man, mortal or human being, as distinguished from the deities and spirits that inhabit the different worlds in the *Ifugao* system of worship. They have their various handicraft-making, dances, and music, as well as their costumes and delicacies.

The Ifugao's handicrafts include woodcarving, weaving, and basket-making using rattan materials. Examples of their costume are the *bahag* and the *tapis*. Examples of their delicacies are the *Dikit* (binakle), *pinikpikan* (inlagim), and their wine *tapuy* (bayah). Their music includes traditional songs and chants

like the *Hudhud*. But today, some of these cultural traditions are in danger of being forgotten. Playing the gongs, a traditional source of music for Ifugao traditional dances and the *Hudhud* chanting is in danger of not being transferred to the young Ifugaos. This is why, according to Talavera (2012), the provincial government of Ifugao, in close coordination with the Philippine Department of Education and other government agencies, promotes and perpetuates the knowledge of the *Hudhud* as an important tradition among the youth.

Along these lines, the researchers would like to know if some of the cultural traditions are still practiced today, especially by those Ifugaos who have left their homeland and determine the challenges and opportunities they have in the practice of their cultural traditions in Villa Aurora and Villa Florentino both in Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, in the northern part of the Philippines, for the purpose of looking at a basis for promotion of local tourism. As Richards (2009) concluded, "Tourists increasingly say that they want to experience local culture, to live like locals, and to find out about the real identity of the places they visit." This could allow the local migrants to showcase their cultural traditions to preserve the same. Lastly, it is hoped that this study will provide new insights into Ifugao culture to help people appreciate the value of different cultures and traditions. The study result could be the basis for recommending local cultural tourism promotion in Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, through the Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park. This study seeks to help the Province of Nueva Vizcaya by utilizing what is considered untapped skills and talents of the Ifugao migrants along or adjacent to the Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach to doing research, which is in the form of descriptive accounts, interviews, artifacts, and photo documentation, was utilized in this study. The research design determines whether the Ifugao first- and second-generation migrants still practice their cultural traditions and investigates challenges and opportunities related to such practice. Many of them were brought along by their parents or were already born

there. Several of the Ifugao migrants came from different provinces like Ifugao, Isabela, Kalinga Apayao, and even Benguet and were married to people from the place, so they had to settle in the research locale. The researchers utilized focus group discussions with in-depth interviews, observations, and photo and video documentation. The study was conducted at Villa Aurora and Villa Florentino in Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. The town of Diadi was chosen as a locale for this research work considering the fact that it is the location of major indigenous peoples of Nueva Vizcaya, namely the Ifugaos. The two localities are located adjacent to the Provincial Local Government of Nueva Vizcaya-owned and operated Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park, which is of special interest since the showcasing of cultural traditions of the migrant Ifugaos can add more attractions to the eco-tourism park.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several of the participants belonged to first-generation migrants, while the majority were second-generation Ifugao migrants. They migrated to Nueva Vizcaya for reasons like lack of livelihood from their original place, poverty brought about by the Second World War, and limited land due to the growing population of the place of origin. The first generation narrated that World War II was one of the reasons why they migrated. Many of them had to look for a better place for their families. Most of the second-generation migrants were tagged along at a later period when the place was developed; others were born in the locality, and others were married to the residents of the locality.

1. Cultural Practices of Ifugao Migrants

a. Dance and Music

The participants said that they occasionally sing the Ifugao song "Itetem," chant the "Hudhud," and dance with the accompaniment of the *gangsa* (gongs).

i. *Itetem*

This song is now sung occasionally, and it may be due to

the fact that many contemporary songs are very accessible through technological gadgets and also by the fact that there are not many visible native houses with ladders as described in the song, and most of the houses now are concrete and not elevated. Also, most of the native houses are usually occupied only by the elderly members of the community. The study of Gauuan et al. (2015) entitled *Itetem: Pagsasalin, Pagsusuri at Paghahalaw* found that a deeper understanding of the song must lead one to a proper understanding of the cultural setup of the Ifugaos' life in the past. The changing landscape of the modern Ifugao houses also influenced the understanding of the song. They recommended that the song be taught at the elementary level because it contains important details about the life and values of the Ifugao people. The current study also asserted that many young generation Ifugao migrants have been influenced by the modern kind of life, so much so that even their songs are slowly taken out of context and, worse, forgotten. This is the reason why in mainland Ifugao, the School of Living Traditions (SLT), where the children are taught to chant and compete for the chanting of the *Hudhud* or the performance of other cultural practices of the Ifugaos, was established (Talavera, 2012).

ii. *Hudhud*

Because of the death or incapability of those who know how to chant the *Hudhud*, the geographical location of the research locale, and the case of intermarriages, the *Hudhud* is seldom sung or chanted. The participants expressed the reality that many young people no longer know much about their cultural traditions. Moreover, the stigma of looking at some Ifugao traditional practices as paganistic, which was an influence of religion, may have led to the occasional chanting of the *Hudhud*. A similar study conducted by Damayon et al. (2022) showed that the geographical location and the case of intermarriages had caused the forgetfulness of the Ifugao migrants about their culture and tradition. Their study further found out that "aside from outgroup/mixed marriages that nurture language and cultural differentiation, the perceived impracticality of their tradition, lack of generational transmission of cultural beliefs, illogical and not based on Christian belief, and the non-practice of the Indigenous traditions were seen as causes of cultural differentiation and even to

the extent of losing their native language (Damayon et al., 2022)."

iii. Dance and Music (Gongs)

The Ifugao dance has simple movements, and it is easy to learn, but one problem is its accompaniment. Few residents have a set of instruments since it is also expensive, and sometimes they even trade their carabaos to have one set. Furthermore, three persons are needed to play the gongs. Also, because of modernization, some young Ifugaos have embraced the modern style of living and educational attainment. The more the students are educated, the less chance the traditional practices are passed on to them by the elders or anyone who knows the traditional practice such that those who are not studying are the ones with greater opportunity to learn the traditional practices of the Ifugao migrants. With Christianization, many prohibitions against paganistic rituals and activities have led to the young's partial abandonment or lack of interest in the Ifugao traditional practices.

b. Handicrafts

Ifugaos are well known for their craftsmanship in their handicrafts, especially in their woodwork (i.e., sculpture) and basketry (i.e., rattan products). Researchers noted that Ifugao migrants have no display of commercial woodwork products. In the interviews, the participants did not mention sculpturing. Although in the town, there are observable woodwork displays. It was only their basketry that was mentioned. Sadly, due to the scarcity of rattan, they are no longer engaged in making rattan-made handicrafts. Bamboo is very much available now in the locality, and it is used to make baskets or cages for animals like chickens. However, not everyone can make it. It is made mostly by the elderly members of the community. However, using bamboo showed the skill of Ifugao migrants in handicraft making.

c. Delicacies

i. Preparation and Cooking of Pork and Chicken

They still cook pork and chicken in their delicacies as they cooked it in the past. They cook it by boiling the meat with salt

and are cut in big sizes so that one piece satisfies one person. They usually serve pork during special occasions like weddings, fiesta, death in the family, and others. They also have delicacies that they have gotten from their ancestors, like "inlagim nga manok" (twisted chicken). They burn the chicken, remove the intestines, and boil it without cutting the meat. The cutting takes place when the meat is cooked by merely separating the different parts using the hand. Unlike pork, they cook and serve chicken anytime they want as long as it is available. Moreover, they also said that today, the Ifugao migrants have almost the same dishes as the other cultural groups like the Ilokanos and even the Tagalogs. This would only show how adaptive the Ifugao migrants are.

ii. *Bayah* or *Tapuy* (Rice Wine)

The participants admitted that they make rice wine only during special occasions like weddings. Rice wine is not prepared every day, but it is also prepared for special occasions and visitors. In a wedding ceremony, the main purpose of making rice wine is for the couple's guests, visitors, relatives, and friends to have something to drink, especially when they give contributions or financial help to the newlywed couple. They also said that *kamoteng kahoy* (cassava) could be used as an alternative to the special rice used in making the wine.

d. Costumes

The Ifugaos are well known for their clothing paraphernalia – the *tapis* (woven wrap) for women and the *bahag* (g-string) for men. Women are usually involved in weaving these clothes. In the research locale community, no one can do the weaving, especially since the ones who knew how to do it had passed away already. They do not produce this clothing anymore, so they buy it. In the past, they used the *bahag* daily as their natural clothes. But time has changed. They said they used the *bahag* every day during peacetime (before World War II) whether they danced or not, but now, in modern times, they wear pants and blouses. They only wear their traditional costumes on special occasions like fiestas, weddings, and other events, especially if they are requested to wear them.

2. Opportunities that Help and Hinder the Ifugao Migrants' Practice of their Cultural Traditions

The participants manifested their willingness to practice some of their cultural traditions. On the one hand, there are different occasions that the researchers consider enablers or helpers in the practice of their tradition. What follows are those that help practice the Ifugao migrants' traditions.

- a. Wedding. The migrants performed their traditional dance during this occasion. What is good is that they accompany their dance with the beating of the *gangsa* as the music for their dance. And their traditional cooking of food, particularly pork, is also practiced. In addition, Ifugao migrants are "obliged" or necessitated to make rice wine for the new couple's wedding celebration and the visitors.
- b. On special occasions like school programs, birthdays, and anniversaries - They play their *gangsa* and dance to its music. They also sing their songs, and, most especially, they wear their traditional costumes on these occasions.
- c. Special request from higher authorities – One enabler or helper in the Ifugao migrants' practice of their cultural tradition is when they are specially requested to perform by the local officials or when competitions and prizes are at stake.
- d. Younger generations are taught by the elders in the community – the older generations are willing to teach the younger generation to pass their practices from generation to generation. However, success depends upon the active participation of the young members of the community.

3. Factors that hinder the Ifugao migrants' practice of their cultural traditions

On the other hand, there are also some factors that the participants considered as hindrances in the practice of their cultural tradition, especially their dance and music, handicrafts, delicacies, and costumes. What follows are the hindrances to the Ifugao migrants' practice of their cultural tradition.

- a. Work/Job – Their work in the *uma* (kaingin) or upland farming is very important, for it is the very reason that they

migrated to the research locale. They have to till the land in order for them to survive their daily living. Because of their busy work, they do not have time to practice their dances. Since most of them, if not all, are involved in planting corn and other root crops, the traditional setting of *Hudhud* chanting is out of place.

- b. Education – For the participants, education is paramount for their future. However, from the focus group discussions, it seems that education in this context has a negative effect on their cultural traditions because children are often out in their community due to their schooling. They miss learning from the elders who are usually left in the community. Moreover, from the participants themselves, educated young people seem to have changed perspectives after getting an education. Their education has made them cling more to matters outside their own culture. This finding is similar to Nantes et al. (2022), who found that education has an adverse effect on Ifugao migrants' practice of their cultural tradition. "Their education is of utmost importance. Almost all of the respondent migrants thought that the solution to their economic woes was to send their children to school. Their education is the only thing they can give them for later on even if they have little land to give or no land at all, they can work and buy land for themselves (Nantes et al., 2022); unfortunately, their education is one concern in the declining practice of their cultural traditions.
- c. Modern civilization – Modern generations and technologies attract the younger generation's attention because they live in modern life. According to the participants, younger generations sometimes are too shy to wear traditional costumes. They prefer to wear modern clothing.
- d. Death of the elders – One considered hindrance is the death of the elders who do not pass the knowledge and skills relevant and related to their cultural traditions. Many of the second generations are not even familiar with the basics of their culture and tradition.
- e. Religion – Many Ifugao migrants have converted to Christianity. Some practices of Ifugao traditional culture are viewed

very negatively. One of the respondents claimed that the "baki" is seen as similar to *kulam* (witchcraft). Because of this, other cultural practices were affected. In Christianity, they have seen many prohibited or forbidden activities that have affected the practice of their cultural tradition.

- f. Inter-marriages – With the inter-marriages of the Ifugao migrants with other cultural groups in the research locale, there is the intermixing of practices, and other young generations would no longer adhere to traditional cultural practices like dancing and wearing traditional costumes.

4. Measures/Ways of Showcasing and Preserving the Ifugao Migrants' Cultural Tradition

The participants are willing to showcase their cultural traditions, and they are excited about the idea. They want to showcase their traditions for them to show how proud they are of their culture and for them to preserve it. They show their traditional skills during special occasions and perform their tradition to entertain and give happiness to people. Thus, what is needed is for them to be organized as one community or as one group and trained to perform their traditional cultural practices.

Different occasions like weddings are held where the prowess in dancing and playing music through the beating of the gongs are displayed. Aside from that, their traditional costumes are also paraded, not to mention their delicacies, especially the rice wine and their preparation and cooking of pork meat. Aside from weddings, the respondents are also very interested in performing in public during town fiestas and other public occasions. This shows that the Ifugao migrant respondents could really showcase their cultural practices.

CONCLUSION

From the data gathered, analyzed, and interpreted, the researchers came up with the following conclusions.

1. The Ifugao migrants in Barangays Villa Aurora and Villa Florentino of Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, occasionally continue practicing their dance and music, wear their cos-

tumes, and make their traditional delicacies while handicrafts in this particular place are not so much practiced due to scarcity of materials and the dearth of skilled craftsmen.

2. Those above-mentioned cultural practices are performed only occasionally during weddings, birthdays, burials, and municipal events, especially when they are invited to perform their native dances and music in their traditional costumes.
3. The opportunities that help the practice of their cultural traditions are: first, wedding celebrations; second, special occasions like school programs, birthdays, and town fiestas; third, the help of LGU officials who promote their cultural traditions by giving them a chance to perform during town fiestas. Lastly, the older generations teach the younger generation to keep their traditional culture.
4. The hindrances to the Ifugao migrant's practice of their traditional cultural tradition are their (farm) work, education that the younger generations receive, religion, and intermarriage.
5. The participants have a strong desire to showcase their cultural practices in public to show that they value and are proud of their traditions. They are not ashamed to express it to others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and conclusion, the following are recommended:

1. The Ifugao Community, in order to regenerate, strengthen, preserve, and nurture the cultural traits, must impart its essence to the younger generation so that they may know how to perform it in the next generations. This must first be done within the family, for it is the primary function or role of the home as the socialization center for transmitting the culture and traditions of the community. This should be done by teaching the steps and skills in terms of their music and dances, procedures, methods, ingredients, and utensils needed in making their delicacies and the proper use and value of their traditional costumes.

2. The Ifugao migrant community also needs to be organized, that is why the Local Government Unit of Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, or other organizations like the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) or offices like the Nueva Vizcaya Provincial Tourism Office may create organizations, implement training and seminars in order for them to refocus on their traditions and learn or appreciate them more.
3. The Provincial Government of Nueva Vizcaya: It is highly recommended that a Cultural Center be put up so that the Ifugaos of Barangay Villa Aurora and Barangay Villa Florentino, who are willing to showcase their cultural traditions may have a venue for such activity. They are encouraged to showcase it, especially to the tourists who are visiting the Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park,
4. The Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park May incorporate the sale of Ifugao handicrafts, delicacies, wine, and other products of the Ifugao migrants of Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya that may help them to have extra income and add a cultural element to the eco-tourism park,
5. The Nueva Vizcaya Provincial Tourism Office: Focus on the promotion of the cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples like Ifugaos by establishing a Cultural Center at the Lower Magat Eco-Park so that tourists will focus not only on ecological attractions but also appreciate and get contact with the cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples group like that of the Ifugao migrants of Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. This is due to the reality that today, most tourists would like to be in contact with different cultural groups;
6. The Local Government of Diadi, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines: Since Indigenous peoples inhabit it, it may promote cultural shows and Ifugao traditional foods and handicrafts by showcasing them during exhibits, gatherings, fiestas, and festivals;
7. The Provincial Government of Nueva Vizcaya and the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) May develop brochures, tarpaulins, and video advertisements to pro-

mote the cultural traditions of Ifugao migrants to showcase their uniqueness from the other cultural groups since tourists desire to experience local cultures.

Implications to Community Engagement and Eco-Cultural-Tourism Promotions

It is a reality that Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park is fast improving and is being regionally and nationally publicized. It has also been observed that more and more clients frequent the eco-tourism park. But could we not make it an eco-cultural park? In most tourism promotions, the culture and traditions of certain cultural groups are usually of interest to most tourists aside from recreation and relaxation. This would also heighten educational promotion on how culture may help promote our ecosystem and, at the same time, preserve our brothers and sisters long honored cultural traditions.

Now, along the mountain ranges adjacent to the Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park are our Ifugao migrants, who have a rich cultural tradition and are willing to showcase their cultural practices. However, it was found by this study that while there are enablers to the practice of their cultural traditions, there are also hindrances to the practice of the same. So, suppose the recommendations above were not acted upon. In that case, the rich traditions of the people close to the Lower Magat Eco-Tourism park might be lost. Unless they are organized as a community of performers of their cultural practices, and when they are not given the opportunity to showcase their cultural tradition and the necessary machinery or facilities to accomplish all of these like the pasalubong center, cultural center, or their equivalents, the effort to promote eco-cultural tourism and to preserve their cultural traditions might be a near impossibility.

In sum, the researchers would like to propose the idea that through this research, the Ifugao migrants could preserve their culture from being forgotten, especially by the younger generations, and at the same time, it can serve as part of their livelihood when they perform and showcase their traditional dances and music with their respective traditional costumes or even sell their traditional delicacies like the rice wine at the Lower Magat Eco-Tourism Park.

In the case of the Local Government Units, the Municipal, and the Provincial level, they can take pride when tourists, local or international, appreciate the showcasing of Ifugao cultural tradition as part of the services of the park, given the existence of an Ifugao village in the same park. Tourists would not only see static material culture but also live performances. This is in line with the Province of Nueva Vizcaya's advocacy for the rights and welfare of our indigenous peoples. Economically, it may even increase the income of the said park. We may even be known internationally because of the features of the eco-tourism park.

More importantly, the primary concern here should be preserving traditional cultural practices. This is because the heart of any eco-cultural tourism is the community's ecology and culture. Without these two very important components of tourism, any local or even international tourism will not succeed. In the long run, it is hoped that any economic benefit for the community will lead to the development of the local tourism industry and vice versa.

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Ensuring Excellence: Instructional Supervision Practices Of Private Sectarian Secondary School Supervisors

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ABSTRACT

Supervision in education is a multifaceted process aimed at fostering teacher growth, enhancing educational quality, and enriching student learning experiences. Among its various forms, instructional supervision plays a key role by ensuring that schools achieve their vision and mission through the supervision, training, and empowerment of teachers. This study examines the extent to which instructional supervision is implemented in private sectarian secondary schools in La Union. Using a mixed-method approach—surveys and one-on-one interviews—relevant data were collected to assess these supervisory practices. Quantitative data were analyzed using means and categorization scales, while qualitative insights were drawn from thematic analysis. A major outcome of this research is the Tri-phasic Instructional Supervision Model, which outlines how school leaders and department heads implement supervision. This model highlights their commitment to fostering a progressive learning environment and improving teaching performance. The study underscores the value of instructional supervision for school administrators. It suggests implications for policy-making, educational governance, and future research directions.

Keywords: Instructional supervisory practices, intervention, guidance, support, performance assessment

INTRODUCTION

In this dynamic era, where the demand for quality education has never been higher, schools face the imperative to adapt,

innovate, and persevere against all odds. Education serves as a tool to instigate change in human life and lays the foundation for development. Schools actively implement formal education, requiring collaboration among various stakeholders for successful implementation. However, the effectiveness of the educational system and the quality of education primarily depend on school management and leadership. Consequently, educational supervisors play a crucial role in supporting teachers, who act as facilitators in student learning. The achievement of supervision goals hinges on the collaborative efforts of instructional supervisors and teachers, who must be trained, highly motivated, and properly guided by their supervisors.

Supervision in education serves as a guiding compass, supporting educators in navigating pedagogical complexities and upholding ethical standards (Grove, 2019). As educational institutions aim to cultivate twenty-first-century skills in graduates, teacher competence becomes pivotal in achieving these educational goals. The way teachers receive support and supervision from leaders significantly influences the outcomes of the supervision process (Wahyuddin, 2020). Collaborative approaches between educational administrators and teachers are key to enhancing the teaching-learning process and fostering effective education (Solheim et al., 2018). Moreover, teachers' engagement with supervisory practices, including various techniques and models employed by supervisors, serves as the driving force behind successful supervision (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

One type of supervision in the educational context is instructional supervision. Instructional supervision is a continuous, collaborative process in education focused on enhancing instructional quality. It involves guidance, assistance, and idea-sharing to help teachers improve learning environments (Wahyu, 2020). This type of supervision is highly significant, as administrators can reinforce teaching practices, thereby positively influencing student learning (Oriente & Alvarado, 2020). By skillfully analyzing performance data, administrators can offer meaningful feedback to teachers, profoundly impacting classroom learning. Given that student learning is the core purpose of schools, effective instructional supervision emerges as a critical function for administrators.

Concerning this, David et al. (2021) highlight the importance of instructional supervision, noting that educational supervisors' instructional supervision practices significantly improve teachers' professional competence, making them more effective for learners' benefit. The quality of teaching, which directly influences learners' achievement, hinges on the effectiveness of the department head teachers and the school principal's instructional supervision. It was also highlighted in the study by Ngloe and Mklulu (2020) that effective instructional supervision was found to be the key factor for academic performance in schools and that instructional supervision should be ongoing, focused on teacher support and learners' needs.

However, challenges are likely to arise in any aspect. Effective instructional supervision cannot occur because some supervisors lack time due to busy schedules and heavy workloads, do not prioritize supervision, lack sufficient training and support, or misunderstand the purpose of supervision (McCrickard, 2022). The problems related to instructional supervisory practices always play a key role in the success or failure of an education system (Terra & Berhanu, 2019). A system that is not thoroughly supervised and evaluated will crumble, resulting in poor academic performance, absenteeism, lateness, disrespect toward school authority, low morale, and diverse forms of disruptive behavior (Adikwu et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, ineffective instructional supervisory practices by school heads contribute to teachers' ineffectiveness and low commitment, resulting in subpar instruction (Sule et al., 2018). Similarly, in Ghana, inadequate supervision of lesson preparation by school heads leads to diminished teacher role performance (Ampofo et al., 2019). Conversely, a study by Akib and Mushin (2019) emphasizes the vital role of educational supervisors and teachers' willingness in ensuring educational efficiency. Ineffective instructional supervision in Nigeria correlates with a decline in the overall educational system (Ijaiya, 2019). In Wakisso District, Uganda, inadequate instructional supervision by head teachers in private secondary schools, relying on informal classroom visits rather than structured supervision, contributes to poor teacher performance (Nwankwoala, 2020).

Apart from this, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted regular schooling in the Philippines, leading to various schooling options, from modular to online instruction. School closures resulted in learning gaps among learners, posing challenges for both teachers and students. The Department of Education (DepEd) implemented the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP) to enhance learning continuity and recovery. Effective instructional supervision practices aligned with 21st-century student needs are emphasized (Basilio, 2021), highlighting the importance of regular monitoring and supportive supervision for teachers' professional development (Noor et al., 2020). Similarly, there's a call for school administrators to improve the implementation of instructional supervision practices to better support teachers (Sumapal & Haramain, 2023). Overall, effective supervision at all education levels is crucial for the efficient management of teaching and learning processes and ensuring quality education. Supervision should focus on enhancing teachers' competencies and addressing challenges to achieve effective educational outcomes (Michael, 2020).

The Basic Education Act of 2001 (RA 9155) serves as the foundation for instructional supervision. The Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 establishes a framework for governance in basic education, emphasizing the importance of instructional supervision in both public and private schools. It delineates the jurisdiction and responsibility of educational institutions, including private schools, in delivering high-quality education. This legislation, rooted in national policy, is committed to upholding and promoting every citizen's right to receive a quality basic education. Its objective is to ensure equal access to education for all Filipino children through the provision of free and mandatory education at the elementary level, and free education at the secondary level. Similarly, DepEd Order 42, issued in 2017, acknowledges the pivotal role of teachers in nurturing learners and underscores the importance of competent educators in enhancing academic performance.

Additionally, DepEd Order 25, issued in 2020, highlights the supervisor's crucial function in enhancing the quality of education at regional, divisional, or school levels. Teachers need proper guidance and motivation to seek out new opportunities

to learn. With these, instructional supervisors should act as learning catalysts, teacher motivators, and knowledge sharers through instructional supervision (Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines, 2022).

The City Schools Division of Dasmariñas in Region IV-A, Calabarzon, acted by issuing Division Memorandum No. 253, s. 2022. This memorandum aligns with the DepEd policy and the Learning Recovery Plan. It directs the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas to implement instructional supervision to guide instructional leaders, school principals, master teachers, head teachers, and teachers. The directive mandates that each school's instructional supervision include the development of monthly supervisory plans for teachers and master teachers, as well as an annual supervisory plan for the school principal. The primary objective is to establish a professional, continuous, and collaborative process to enhance instructional quality. Similarly, in Region X-Northern Mindanao's Division of Malaybalay City, Dr. Victoria Gazo, the Assistant Schools Division Superintendent, actively issued Division Memorandum No. 057, s. 2023, on February 23, 2023. This memorandum focuses on the enforcement of instructional supervision through collaborative classroom observation and the utilization of the Rating Sheet for Teachers and Classroom Observation. The primary objective is to facilitate the seamless delivery of teaching and learning instructions across schools and learning centers.

Additionally, this initiative aims to establish a standardized, comprehensive developmental framework to support teachers' professional growth within professional learning communities actively. The overarching goal is to enhance instructional capabilities and, consequently, improve learning outcomes (Department of Education, Division of Malaybalay City, 2023).

In addition, according to Lagado (2023), in Region VIII (Eastern Visayas), the Schools Division Superintendents issued Regional Memorandum No. 133. 2023, containing the updates on the conduct of instructional supervision and implementation of the guide for instructions yielding to archetypal teachers and learning achievements via a mentoring program. The memoran-

dum mandated the supervisors to use the Instructional Supervision Plan and to conduct the supervision every month to enhance the teacher's teaching competency.

Principals face hurdles in fulfilling their supervisory duties, including insufficient preparation for supervision, strained relationships between teachers and supervisors, and inadequate support from higher authorities. Although supervisors may be proficient in their subject matter, they often lack formal qualifications and continuous training to stay abreast of educational advancements crucial for effective supervision. The heavy workload on school supervisors, encompassing administrative duties and personal teaching responsibilities, frequently restricts the time available for practical supervisory tasks within their schools (Enaigbe, 2009; Ngole & Mkulu, 2021).

Conversely, multiple inquiries examine instructional supervisory methods in public and Catholic educational institutions to foster academic distinction (Whelan, 2019; Rufus, 2023). Catholic schools confront various challenges that jeopardize their mission and operational continuity, such as the erosion of values, attrition among educators, and dwindling enrollment figures (Bual & Madrigal, 2018; CEAP, 2016; Madrigal & Oracion, 2019; Caruso, 2012). To tackle these issues, the Philippine Catholic Schools Standards (PCSS) were formulated by CEAP, providing schools with guidance on harmonizing their practices with Church doctrines and international benchmarks (CEAP, 2016; Bual & Madrigal, 2018). These standards are geared towards bolstering the enduring viability and caliber of Catholic education by ensuring alignment with Church precepts (CEAP, 2016; Madrigal & Oracion, 2019).

Furthermore, Bual and Madrigal (2018) underscore how diocesan schools attain exemplary Catholic education by surpassing PCSS benchmarks, adhering to governmental regulations, and upholding their evangelistic mission. Improving instructional supervisory techniques is crucial to aligning school objectives with Church directives. The significance of adept educators and the enhancement of instructional supervision to elevate diocesan schools to distinction underscores the challenges posed by the departure of qualified teachers (Jorilla & Bual, 2021). Similarly,

Aureada (2021) identifies disparities among school administrators in overseeing instructional aspects, noting that despite recognizing the importance of classroom observations, time constraints and competing responsibilities impede consistent implementation.

In this study's setting, the researcher, affiliated with an educational institution, noted that instructional supervisors face time constraints in supervisory tasks. Respondents highlighted the need to keep up with current educational practices, especially in schools lacking clear instructional supervision procedures. Despite the availability of evaluation tools, there's a limited understanding of supervision's purpose, often reducing it to checking attendance and paperwork, which impacts effectiveness due to heavy workloads, including administrative tasks. Additionally, the observation revealed inadequate time for supervision, leading to poor communication between supervisors and teachers, resulting in misunderstandings and misaligned educational goals. Evaluating teacher performance poses challenges, and last-minute summative observations can cause stress due to inadequate preparation time.

Moreover, in the same setting, the researcher conducted an initial survey about the instructional supervision practices of school heads and department heads. The survey results indicate that the majority of school heads in the locale prioritize classroom observations as a primary method of instructional supervision. However, there is a notable lack of consistent feedback provision following these observations. Additionally, respondents express a desire for more professional development opportunities focused on instructional leadership skills. The survey highlights a need for improved communication channels between school heads and teachers regarding instructional expectations and goals. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of targeted support and training initiatives to enhance instructional supervisory practices in the locale.

In the same manner, as a Senior High School teacher and a Doctor of Education student with a profound appreciation for the significance of instructional supervision for both teachers and students, the researcher is actively engaged in the supervi-

sion processes led by educational leaders at their school. Considering these experiences and insights, the study was initiated to examine the instructional supervisory practices employed by school heads and department heads in the research locale. The overarching goal is to facilitate the successful implementation of instructional supervisory practices in schools, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of educational administrators, management, and teachers.

Furthermore, the researcher identified a notable gap during the literature review, revealing a scarcity of studies focusing on the instructional supervisory practices of department heads and school heads in private sectarian secondary schools. Building on Haramian's (2019) recommendation for a mixed-methods approach to explore supervisors' role in enhancing teachers' commitment to self-improvement, participation in seminars, training, and enrollment in postgraduate studies, this study aims to address this gap and deepen understanding of managing basic education schools.

Additionally, there is a recognized gap concerning the absence of comprehensive instructional supervisory plans tailored specifically for private sectarian secondary schools. Despite the pivotal role of instructional supervision in enhancing teaching quality and student outcomes, there is a lack of structured guidance on how supervisors and teachers in these schools can effectively implement and benefit from instructional supervision practices.

Lastly, the primary goal of this research is to determine the extent of instructional supervision practices of school heads and department heads in terms of guidance, support, and performance assessment. By doing so, the study aims to contribute significantly to existing knowledge in this field, ultimately enhancing the competencies of these educational leaders. The outcomes of this study are anticipated to lay the groundwork for future instructional supervision training programs specifically tailored for school heads and department heads in Catholic Schools within the Diocese of La Union.

METHODOLOGY

Design and Participants

This study used a sequential explanatory mixed-method design to examine instructional supervisory practices of secondary school supervisors. Quantitative data identified patterns, and qualitative data explored reasons for these practices. Participants included 44 supervisors and 318 teachers from Catholic schools in the Diocese of La Union. For interviews, purposive sampling selected 5 supervisors and 5 teachers who had at least 3 years of experience in a supervisory role and were actively involved in instructional supervision.

Instruments

Quantitative data were collected via validated researcher-made questionnaires with a 5-point Likert scale across three dimensions: teacher guidance, support, and performance assessment (20 indicators each). Five experts confirmed content validity, and reliability was established through pilot testing (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.97-0.98$). Qualitative data were collected using a validated interview guide focusing on the rationale and effects of supervisory practices.

Procedures

Ethical clearance and participant consent were obtained prior to data collection. Questionnaires were distributed and retrieved by the researcher, and interviews were audio-recorded with permission, transcribed, and securely stored. Data processing followed the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, weighted means, and rankings on a 5-point scale (Very Highly Practiced to Not Practiced). Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's six-step framework, allowing the identification of themes that supported and explained the quantitative findings. Integration of both data strands provided a comprehensive understanding of supervisors' instructional practices.

RESULTS

Table 1

Summary of the Instructional Supervisory Practices of Private Sectarian Secondary School Supervisors

Phases of Instructional Supervision	Weighted Mean	DE
Guidance	4.35	HP
Support	4.39	HP
Performance Assessment	4.29	HP
Overall Mean	4.34	HP

Table 1 provides an overview of the extent to which supervisors in private sectarian secondary schools implement instructional supervisory practices across three phases of instructional supervision. The table shows that school supervisors in private sectarian secondary schools generally engage in instructional supervisory practices across all three phases to a high degree ($M=4.34$), which is interpreted as highly practiced, indicating that supervisors most of the time practice these practices and have a strong level of implementation and adherence.

Consequently, supervisors in private sectarian secondary schools' most practiced phase of instructional supervision is teachers' support ($M=4.39$), described as highly practiced, indicating that supervisors most of the time engage in activities aimed at supporting teachers in their professional development, instructional delivery, and overall effectiveness. This indicates that by prioritizing teacher support, supervisors demonstrate a commitment to nurturing and enhancing educators' skills and capabilities within their schools.

Based on the researcher's data analysis, supervisors consider cultivating a dynamic learning environment as the reason they prioritize providing support to teachers within the framework of instructional supervision. This theme includes enhancing instructional effectiveness, creating a learning culture, and promoting self-efficacy and autonomy. These themes explain why teachers' support was regarded as the most frequently practiced phase of instructional supervision among private sectarian secondary school supervisors. Participant 3 highlighted this concern, stating, "I want to be directly involved with my teachers, particularly in addressing their individual needs. For me, quality

education can only be provided when there is effective supervision.” Participant 5 expressed a similar sentiment, explaining that

From television, laptop, printer, bond paper, and whiteboard marker, everything is provided because I want my teachers to fully prepare themselves when delivering their lessons. I want them to feel comfortable during their lessons as well. I also send them to seminars and workshops that I believe will truly enhance their teaching capabilities. Additionally, I support them in every contest they participate in.

These statements collectively highlight a focus on enhancing teachers' capabilities through professional development opportunities such as seminars and workshops. By investing in their teachers' continuous learning and growth, they seek to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver quality education.

Conversely, the performance assessment phase is the least practiced among supervisors ($M=4.29$), yet it is described as highly practiced. This means that supervisors most of the time practice performance assessment, but, in contrast to the emphasis on teacher support, the phase of instructional supervision focused on performance assessment receives less attention from supervisors in private sectarian secondary schools. This also indicates that while it is still implemented to some extent, it is not as prioritized or emphasized as other phases of instructional supervision.

In addition, the supervisors consider resource optimization as a factor or reason that imposes limitations on their ability to prioritize and invest in teachers' performance assessment. This theme includes time constraints and high-volume tasks. These themes explain why the teachers' performance assessment was regarded as the least practiced phase in instructional supervision among private sectarian secondary school supervisors. Participant 1 highlighted this concern by stating:

Performance assessment is very important, but it may be practiced less due to time constraints. Due to my administrative tasks, I often cannot observe their classes regularly. Additional-

ly, since I also need to observe other teachers, post-conferences after each

Participant 2 reiterated this viewpoint, explaining:

A school head has a lot of work to do. There are numerous administrative tasks, paperwork to complete, scheduling teachers, emergency meetings, and other urgent matters that need immediate attention. That is why I was not able to observe my teachers' classes as often as I would have liked.

In the same manner, Participant 4 expressed a similar sentiment, explaining, "I was not able to enter and observe their classes regularly or even visit their classes often because of my busy schedule." These statements collectively highlight the challenges supervisors encounter in effectively implementing the performance assessment phase of instructional supervision.

Additionally, secondary school supervisors highly practice guidance in supervising teachers (M=4.35). This means that private sectarian secondary school supervisors most often practice the teachers' guidance phase of instructional supervision when supervising their teachers. This indicates that supervisors use teachers' guidance when aiming to improve teaching effectiveness and promote student success.

Moreover, supervisors encourage and foster a culture of collaboration among teachers by facilitating PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) or other collaborative structures (M=4.63), which is described as very highly practiced. This practice, under the teachers' guidance phase, means that supervisors encourage a collaborative learning community among the teachers at all times. They aim to enhance teaching effectiveness and improve student learning outcomes, and to enable teachers to come together to discuss teaching strategies, share resources, and reflect on their practices.

Furthermore, the strategies for conducting PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) emerged with one (1) theme and two (2) sub-themes from the analysis of responses from school heads and department heads. Teachers' feedback corroborates the information provided by supervisors, confirming the effectiveness of the identified strategies. In terms of

methodology, the data from both groups of participants underwent distinct analyses before being compared to identify the final themes on the strategies supervisors used to conduct PLCs. Based on the treated data, supervisors conduct PLCs through structural assistance and resources in which the supervisors employ (1) professional sharing, and (2) promoting collaboration. This theme demonstrates the significance of PLCs as a vehicle for guiding teachers' professional growth and fostering a collaborative learning environment that benefits both teachers and students alike.

Supervisors conduct PLCs through structural assistance and resources, specifically by professional sharing. This theme encompasses the provision of structural support and resources by school heads to facilitate PLCs. It includes allocating time in the school schedule for PLC meetings. Participant 1 explained, "Whenever there is a teacher who attended seminars, we gather the teachers for professional learning and sharing. The teachers who attended the seminar shared their learning with the faculty." Participant 6 stated this sentiment, noting, "We conduct PLCs every week for us to plan our Lesson Plan, who will make it, what lessons are to be included, what strategies, and what activities must we give." Participant 9 echoed this concern, explaining, "Our school conducts PLC every week, and every time we need to do professional sharing when a teacher comes back from a seminar or workshop in which he/she will share his/her learning with us. In certain situations, PLC meetings may occur at our school on a quarterly or periodic basis. However, most of the time we do PLC weekly meetings."

These statements emphasize that there is a structured agenda set by school heads, focusing on lesson planning, allocation of responsibilities, inclusion of appropriate teaching strategies, and selection of relevant activities, with flexibility to adjust the frequency based on specific needs or circumstances.

Another strategy used by supervisors in conducting PLCs through structural assistance and resources is promoting collaboration. This theme emphasizes that PLCs improve students' learning experience, particularly through the development of high-quality lesson plans and assessments. In line with this, Par-

Participant 2 mentioned, “We do it frequently as much as possible, especially in crafting lesson plans to give a better learning experience for our students.” Similarly, Participant 4 shared, “We do PLCs by letting the teachers who teach the same subject in the department meet with each other and plan together the LPs, summative test, and even Performance tasks”. Likewise, Participant 6 explained, “...we maximize the time for us to do professional sharing not just on our expertise but also with the challenges we encounter, not just with the lessons but also in dealing with our students.” These statements underscore the commitment to promoting collaboration within PLCs by emphasizing regular engagement, subject-specific planning, and effective utilization of meeting time for sharing knowledge, expertise, and experiences. These emphasize that supervisors encourage a culture of open communication and collaboration within PLCs, where teachers feel comfortable sharing their experiences and supporting one another in addressing common challenges.

Conversely, assisting teachers in crafting lesson plans and syllabi to determine strategies that best work in the teaching and learning process, and to outline specific strategies and timelines for achieving their goals, has the lowest mean ($M=4.17$), indicating it is highly practiced in instructional supervision. This means that, on average, supervisors are slightly less involved in this indicator than others, and they give slightly less emphasis or attention to assisting teachers in developing their action plans.

On the other hand, time management workload is the reason why assisting teachers in crafting their lesson plans and syllabi to determine strategies that best work in the teaching and learning process, and to outline specific strategies and timelines for achieving their goals, is the lowest indicator in the teachers’ guidance phase. Time management workload refers to the challenges school heads face in balancing their time and workload while providing adequate support to teachers in crafting lesson plans and syllabi. This includes sustainability and follow-through, as well as differing needs and priorities.

Sustainability and follow-through refer to the context of assisting teachers in crafting lesson plans, ensuring that the support provided is ongoing and not a one-time occurrence. It in-

volves the difficulty of implementing strategies or systems that consistently enable teachers to develop high-quality lesson plans over the long term. Moreover, it involves carrying out actions or commitments to completion. It refers to the challenge of ensuring that teachers implement the lesson plans they have crafted effectively in the classroom. Participant 1's response can explain this: "I find it hard to align the lesson plans and syllabi with the specific needs and goals of the teachers and their students, especially since we have different students per school year."

Participant 2 explained:

I find it hard to ensure that the syllabi and lesson plans are realistic and achievable within the constraints of time, resources, and institutional policies, since a school year can bring a lot of changes; thus, we as educators need to be flexible.

These statements underscore the complexity of lesson planning and syllabus development in education, emphasizing the need for educators to be adaptable, resourceful, and responsive to the dynamic nature of teaching and learning environments.

Moreover, differing needs and priorities are among the challenges school heads face in assisting teachers in crafting lesson plans and syllabi. This challenge arises because teachers have distinct teaching styles, educational philosophies, and classroom dynamics, leading to differing preferences and approaches in lesson planning. Additionally, students within each classroom may have diverse learning needs, interests, and abilities, requiring customized instructional strategies and content delivery methods. This is explained in Participant 3's response, which mentions, "In providing ongoing support and feedback to teachers as they implement their action plans, since I also have other administrative tasks." Participant 5:

I find it hard to supervise them in crafting lesson plans due to a lack of time. Because of heavy workloads, it is hard for me to assist teachers in crafting their action plans, especially since we follow a PEAC format.

These statements suggest that the school heads find it

challenging to offer ongoing support and feedback to teachers due to competing demands from other administrative tasks. This indicates a struggle to balance administrative responsibilities with the need to support teachers in their professional development and implementation of action plans. Moreover, these statements highlight the difficulty in supervising teachers in crafting lesson plans due to time constraints. The administrator expresses that heavy workloads make it challenging to assist teachers in creating their action plans, particularly when there is a specific format or framework to follow.

Furthermore, supervisors report high levels of support in their instructional supervision in their schools ($M=4.39$). This means that private sectarian secondary school supervisors most of the time practice the teachers' support phase of instructional supervision.

Listening and responding to teachers' concerns ($M=4.57$) is described as very highly practiced. This means supervisors are good at listening to teachers and helping them with their problems. This can make teachers feel more confident and better about themselves when they're teaching. This shows that school supervisors are doing their best to inspire and motivate teachers and are also sharing new ways to teach by talking with them. When they listen to and respond to teachers' concerns, it shows they're there to help and make the school a good place for teaching and learning. Supervisors prioritize recognizing and appreciating the hard work and achievements of teachers, actively acknowledging the valuable contributions they make to the school community.

Furthermore, the strategies employed by teachers during the teachers' support phase of instructional supervision emerged as one (1) theme with three (3) sub-themes, as identified from the analysis of responses from school heads and department heads. Teachers' feedback corroborates the information provided by supervisors, confirming the effectiveness of the identified strategies. In terms of methodology, the data from both groups of participants underwent distinct analyses before being compared to identify the final themes regarding the strategies for employing teachers' support used by the supervisors. Based on

the treated data, supervisors employ teachers' support through the timely provision of resources, specifically (1) recognition of expertise and contribution, (2) transparent communication channels, and (3) professional growth. This theme encompasses various ways in which school heads employ the teachers' support phase in instructional supervision.

Supervisors empower teachers' support by recognizing expertise and contributions. This theme encompasses acknowledging and valuing individuals' knowledge, skills, and contributions within a particular context or domain. Participant 1 explained, "I provide them personalized feedback on their contributions." Participant 3 echoed this concern, stating, "I organize special events or ceremonies to celebrate the teachers' achievements for me to show my appreciation." Participant 5 shared this sentiment, explaining, "I congratulate them personally for their achievements and accomplishments."

These statements were also supported by the teachers' responses when asked about the ways their school head supports teachers. Participant 7 shared that, "The school head shows appreciation for our accomplishments by planning and celebrating a simple yet memorable celebration for all of us." Participant 8, "The school head recognizes our achievements and efforts, and he also sees to it that we have the office supplies needed for our teaching instruction." These statements emphasize the importance of recognizing and honoring individuals' unique talents, perspectives, and efforts, fostering a culture of respect, appreciation, and empowerment. It involves acknowledging individuals' expertise based on their qualifications, experience, and achievements, as well as recognizing their contributions to the success, growth, or advancement of a team, organization, or community.

Another strategy used by supervisors to support teachers is the use of transparent communication channels. This refers to establishing clear and open lines of communication between school supervisors and teachers. This theme emphasizes the importance of creating an environment where information flows freely, feedback is welcome, and concerns are addressed openly and honestly. Transparent communication channels enable

teachers to express their thoughts, share ideas, seek assistance, and provide feedback on various aspects of their professional development and teaching practices. This is evident in Participant 1's response, who echoed this sentiment, explaining, "I encourage open communication with my teachers in which I listen to my teachers' concerns." Participant 4 mentioned, "What I do is to listen to their concerns and if I can, try to respond and address their concerns." Participant 5 explained, "I also serve as their surfboard every time they have some personal problems, kasi I can be their ate or mother naman sa school e." These statements suggest that the school supervisors prioritize open communication and support for their teachers' well-being and professional growth. Also, the statements indicate that supervisors value teachers' input and perspectives, creating an environment where teachers feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, ideas, and challenges. They commit to supporting teachers and ensuring that their needs are heard and addressed promptly. These statements further underscore that the supervisors see themselves not only as professional mentors but also as sources of personal support.

In addition, another strategy supervisors employ during the teachers' support phase is offering professional development opportunities. This theme refers to the ongoing development and improvement of teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies related to their profession. This theme encompasses various activities, opportunities, and resources provided to teachers to enhance their effectiveness as educators and promote their continuous learning and development. This is evident in Participant 2's response: "What I do is I am encouraging them, supporting them to enroll and finish their post-graduate studies, recommending them to attend seminars and training for them to hasten their skills and abilities, especially the teachers who coach students during contests." Participant 3 also shared this concern, explaining, "I see to it that there is a fair and equal chance for them to be selected as participants during seminars and webinars." Participant 4 mentioned, "I am sending my teachers to seminars and encouraging collaboration and teamwork for the teachers to work cooperatively to complete most of the paperwork." These statements imply that supervisors should ac-

tively foster, support, and sustain a culture of professional growth within the school, recognizing that such efforts can enhance teacher effectiveness and ultimately lead to better educational outcomes for students.

Meanwhile, supervisors employ teachers' support for Quality Education. This theme focuses on why school supervisors support their teachers' professional development and career growth to ensure quality education. This includes building teacher capacity, improving student learning outcomes, and recognizing impact. Additionally, the reasons why supervisors employ the teachers' support phase of instructional supervision emerged as one (1) theme with three (3) sub-themes from the analysis of responses from school heads and department heads. Based on the treated data, supervisors employ teachers' support for Quality Education specifically (1) building teacher capacity, (2) student learning outcomes, and (3) recognition of impact. This theme encompasses various reasons why school heads employ the teachers' support phase in instructional supervision.

Supervisors employ the teachers' support phase of instruction to build teacher capacity. This refers to the process of developing and enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills, and abilities to improve their instructional practice and positively impact student learning. This implies that when school supervisors focus on building teacher capacity, they are taking an active role in both their teachers' personal and professional development. This is evident in the response of Participant 1, stating, "I believe that's the right thing to do. They deserve to be praised, they also deserve to be taken care of, and at the same time, they deserve to be thanked." Participant 2 mentioned, "By providing guidance, feedback, and resources, I can also assist teachers in improving their instructional practices, refining their pedagogical techniques, and staying current with educational trends as well." Participant 5 shared the same sentiment, stating, "This improves teaching effectiveness, enhances student learning outcomes, and fosters a positive school culture." These statements highlight that supervisors are important facilitators in a cycle of continuous improvement for teachers, with the end goal of optimizing the educational experience for students and fostering a dynamic, positive school community.

Another reason supervisors employ the teachers' support phase is to improve student learning outcomes. By supporting teachers, supervisors can help them develop more effective teaching methods, which directly impact students' ability to learn and succeed academically. This further indicates that supervisors support and encourage the adoption of proven instructional strategies, which can lead to greater student engagement and a better understanding of the material. This is evident in Participant 2's response: "I want them to be the best they can be because they have a significant impact on students' performance." Participant 3 shared, "So that I can also ensure that quality education is truly delivered to the children." Participant 5 mentioned, "I want to ensure that teachers do their job properly, encouraging us to enroll in our post-graduate studies." These statements suggest that it's the job of supervisors to ensure the education provided is high-quality and keeps improving. Supervisors must monitor teachers' progress and help them develop their skills over time.

In addition, another reason why supervisors employ the teachers' support phase is the recognition of its impact. This refers to the various ways in which supervisors show their gratitude to the teachers. This means recognizing the impact involves understanding and supporting effective teaching methods that improve student learning. It shows that when supervisors acknowledge and support teachers' growth, both teacher performance and student success can be boosted. Supervisors are aware that their role is crucial to improving how well classes are taught, and they aim to ensure their support leads to real changes in the classroom. They use evidence of what works in teaching to make smart choices for future training and resources for teachers. This is evident in Participant 2's response: "It's our way to express our gratitude for their pivotal role in molding young minds and paving the way for the next generation." Participant 3 stated, "For me, it's a way of expressing gratitude for their tireless efforts to inspire, educate, and support our students." Participant 4 mentioned, "Recognition motivates teachers to strive for excellence." The statements highlight the supervisor's role in the teachers' support phase of instructional supervision as one that not only acknowledges the importance of

teachers' contributions but also actively seeks to celebrate and reinforce them through various forms of appreciation. This, in turn, can lead to a more motivated and effective teaching staff, contributing positively to the whole educational process. Also, recognizing the impact means holding everyone involved accountable for students' learning. When supervisors' and teachers' efforts are recognized and valued, it creates an environment where teachers feel confident to try new things and be innovative, all to help students learn better.

On the other hand, supervisors highly practice working closely with teachers to identify areas of their teaching practice that could benefit from improvement ($M=4.19$). This means that although most of the time they employ this practice in supervising their teachers, not all the time do supervisors work closely with teachers to collaborate and pinpoint areas of their teaching practice that could be enhanced.

Supervisors cited workload pressures as the reason this indicator was ranked lowest. This refers to the demands and responsibilities placed on individuals within a certain role or profession that consume their time and energy. These pressures can arise from various sources, such as high task volume, tight deadlines, administrative duties, meetings, or productivity expectations. Workload pressures can lead to stress, overwhelm, and difficulty managing one's workload effectively. This theme includes limited observational procedures, scheduling constraints, and resistance to feedback.

Supervisors attribute this low rating to limited opportunities for them to observe teachers in action. Because they have fewer chances to observe teaching practices directly, supervisors find it challenging to identify and address specific areas where teachers could enhance their effectiveness. In essence, these highlight a gap in the support provided to teachers, particularly in personalized feedback and guidance to improve their teaching practice. This refers to heavy workloads impeding supervisors' ability to dedicate time to this task. In essence, the challenge lies in balancing administrative duties with providing personalized support to teachers. This can be explained by the statement of Participant 1, who said, "There's a lack of time to visit my teach-

ers in their classrooms frequently.” Participant 2, “I find it difficult to find time for observations, feedback sessions, and professional development.” These statements imply that participants are struggling to allocate sufficient time to key aspects of their roles as educators or supervisors.

Moreover, scheduling constraints are among the challenges that school heads and department heads face in this indicator. This refers to limitations or restrictions that affect the ability to allocate time for specific activities within a given timeframe. These constraints can include limited time slots, conflicting priorities, deadlines, or logistical challenges that make it difficult to organize or schedule activities effectively. Scheduling constraints can pose challenges in planning and coordinating tasks, events, or appointments within the available time and resources. Participant 2's statement can explain the finding: “I am not able to work closely with teachers to identify their needs for improvement because of teachers' demanding schedules.” Participant 5 mentioned, “It is difficult because I have a heavy workload and other priorities and responsibilities of a school head.” These statements suggest that participants are facing challenges in providing support to teachers due to various constraints. These highlight the impact of time constraints and competing priorities on educators' ability to provide effective support and guidance to their colleagues.

Furthermore, supervisors regarded the practice of performance assessment as highly practiced ($M=4.29$). Private sectarian secondary school supervisors frequently practice assessments to work collaboratively with teachers to set goals, monitor progress, and adjust instructional strategies as needed to enhance teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

Ensuring that teachers' classroom priorities are consistent with the school's goals and directions ($M=4.41$) is described as highly practiced. This finding indicates that school supervisors strongly urge teachers to ensure that what they do in their classrooms aligns with the school's overall aims. When teachers align their priorities with the school's goals, they become more effective teachers, ultimately leading to better learning outcomes for students. This further underscores the importance of collaboration

and alignment between teachers and the school's broader objectives in fostering student success.

On the other hand, supervisors consider alignment with educational standards as a manner in which they employ the teachers' performance assessment phase of instructional supervision. This theme highlights the strategies school supervisors use in teachers' performance assessments. This includes (1) optimizing the frequency of classroom observations, (2) employing cross-school collaboration, and (3) encouraging collaborative feedback. These themes reflect a structured approach to classroom observation aimed at evaluating teachers' adherence to educational standards and facilitating effective communication of performance expectations to support professional growth and development.

Consequently, optimizing the frequency of classroom observation involves determining the most effective and efficient schedule for conducting them. This theme involves verifying that teachers' content aligns with the prescribed curriculum standards. Moreover, this means supervisors need to assess the effectiveness of teachers' chosen teaching methodologies in facilitating student learning, including observing classroom instruction to determine whether teachers are employing strategies appropriate to the subject matter and conducive to student engagement and understanding. This is evident in Participant 1's response: "I do supervision twice a year, but if I can see that there's still some aspect that the teacher needs to improve, I add additional classroom observation." Participant 2 mentioned, "I observe teachers twice a year, one announced and one unannounced, and these two observations are both graded." Participant 3 echoed, "I observe my teachers during their classroom instruction. I also do it twice a year, announced and unannounced. But as a routine, I roam around the campus every morning to see if the teachers are implementing what is included in their LPs." Participant 4 shared, "Only the newbie teachers undergo pop-in observations by their department heads and by me as the school head. However, all teachers are observed during summative evaluation or summative observation." These statements indicate that supervisors need to ensure teachers' performance aligns with established educational standards,

thereby contributing to high-quality education and student success. This further underscores that supervisors evaluate how teachers assess student learning to ensure that assessment practices are fair, reliable, and aligned with educational standards. They track educational outcomes to gauge the effectiveness of teachers' instruction in achieving desired learning goals. This implies that supervisors play a crucial role in promoting a culture of continuous improvement among teachers by fostering reflection, collaboration, and professional growth.

Cross-school collaboration is also a strategy used by supervisors during the teachers' performance assessment phase of instructional supervision. This theme involves initiatives such as joint professional development, collaborative projects, and the sharing of instructional materials and strategies among schools. Participant 3 shared this sentiment, explaining, "We have our AST observation twice per school year in which principals from other schools go to a certain school and observe the teachers during their classroom instruction." Similarly, Participant 4 also stated, "...the Diocesan schools also have what they call AST observation, in which the principals from the diocesan schools go to a certain school to observe the teachers in their classroom instruction. This is done twice a year, and it is also announced and unannounced." These statements underscore the value of supervisors leveraging collective knowledge and experiences to improve instructional supervision outcomes and support the professional growth of educators across multiple schools or educational settings.

Additionally, supervisors also practice encouraging collaborative feedback in the teachers' performance assessment phase of instructional supervision. This refers to the diversity of viewpoints and insights, which enriches the feedback process and can lead to more comprehensive and balanced evaluations. In line with this, Participant 3 shared this practice, stating, "The teachers also have their peer observations in which the observing teacher visits the classroom of their peer during a scheduled class period." Participant 5 also stated, "They have peer observation. Peer observations are like, you know, part of an ongoing process of professional growth, and teachers need to keep collaborating, sharing feedback, and learning from each other to

improve their practice.” Participant 3 shared this sentiment, stating, “He/she is well-informed about his/her strengths and weaknesses”. He also added, “I give my advice and share my methods or strategies, which I think would be applicable in some instances.” These indicate that supervisors offer constructive feedback, share observations, and collaboratively explore solutions to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. These statements indicate that supervisors solicit input and perspectives from multiple individuals, rather than relying solely on individual assessments or opinions. Conversely, pointing out specific strengths in teachers' instructional practices in post-observation feedback (M=4.04) is interpreted as highly practiced. Despite its lower rating, this finding emphasizes that school supervisors still see strengths in how teachers teach, especially when they give feedback after observing classes. This feedback lets principals check how well their advice is working. This feedback aims to help teachers grow, solve problems, and improve their teaching. The results show that supervisors are recognizing teachers' strengths and offering guidance to improve teaching and learning. By addressing any weak points during evaluations, teaching, and learning can get even better. It's important for supervisors to accurately see how well each teacher is doing and have a way to keep improving things regularly.

While implementing strategies to enhance supervisors' instructional supervisory practices, it's crucial to recognize that challenges may persist despite their best efforts. Even with proactive measures in place, supervisors remain mindful of the inherent complexities and uncertainties that accompany their endeavors. Based on the treated data, supervisors consider striking a balance to be the challenge they have encountered in helping teachers design their lesson plans. This theme highlights the challenges school heads face in implementing teacher performance assessment. It emphasizes the delicate balance supervisors must navigate in managing time constraints to facilitate effective collaboration with teachers. This theme includes (1) Streamlined Observation Procedures, (2) time constraints, (3) communication barriers, and (4) heavy workloads.

Streamlining Observation Procedures in a way that balances accountability and support is one of the challenges super-

visors encounter when assisting teachers in crafting their lesson plans. This theme suggests that streamlined observation procedures during the teachers' performance assessment phase can pose challenges for ensuring comprehensive, nuanced evaluations of teaching effectiveness. While streamlining aims to simplify the process, it may inadvertently overlook important aspects of teaching practice that require deeper analysis. Additionally, there's a risk of reducing observation criteria to a limited set of metrics, potentially neglecting the complexity of classroom dynamics and individual teaching styles. Participant 1 shared this sentiment, explaining, "Not being able to have pre-observation conferences, so I just provide the evaluation tool." The response of Participant 1, a school head, was corroborated by Participant 10, who stated, "Not given an evaluation tool, and we do not know the key areas to be observed." These statements underscore that streamlining procedures may pressure prioritizing efficiency over quality, leading to rushed assessments and superficial feedback. This further indicates that supervisors need to establish clear criteria and expectations for streamlined observations, balancing efficiency with thorough evaluation. Additionally, this offers supervisors an opportunity to enhance the overall quality and impact of teacher performance assessments, contributing to ongoing improvements in teaching and learning outcomes within the school community.

Time constraints are one of the challenges supervisors face when implementing the performance assessment phase. This refers to the limited amount of time available to meet and discuss the upcoming observation. This theme acknowledges that both the supervisor and the teacher being observed have busy schedules, and therefore may make it difficult to find a suitable time to meet before the observation. This concern was shared by Participant 1, who stated, "Aligning the schedules of both the teacher and myself amidst our busy schedules because teachers often have packed agendas with teaching responsibilities, meetings, and other commitments." Similarly, Participant 3 also states, "Difficulty in aligning my schedule with the schedule of the teachers." Participant 5 mentioned, "Time constraints and alignment of my schedule with the teachers' schedule." These statements underscore that limited time may limit the frequency

and duration of observations, thereby reducing supervisors' opportunities to evaluate teachers' instructional practices comprehensively. This also implies that time constraints can hinder supervisors' ability to engage in meaningful follow-up discussions and support teachers in implementing recommended improvements. As a result, supervisors must carefully prioritize their time and resources, balancing efficiency with the need to provide valuable feedback and support to teachers.

Besides, supervisors also consider communication barriers a challenge. This theme refers to the challenges supervisors encounter in effectively employing the teachers' performance assessment phase in instructional supervision. This concern was shared by Participant 1, stating, "As a school administrator, my schedule can also be demanding, with administrative tasks, meetings, and other duties vying for my time." Similarly, Participant 4 explained, "There are conflicting commitments such as teaching duties, meetings, and other responsibilities that may make scheduling difficult." These responses from the school supervisors were corroborated by the responses of the teachers, in which Participant 6 mentioned, "Short notice of last-minute changes due to unforeseen circumstances, such as student emergencies, school events, or meetings, or professional development sessions." Similarly, Participant 9 explained, "When there is an emergency meeting, sudden errands, or tasks to be done, especially when the teacher's schedule is already fully occupied, our principal may need to attend to them." Participant 10, "Communication challenges, such as miscommunication or difficulty reaching the teacher or observer, can hinder the scheduling process." These underscore the need for school supervisors to manage complex scheduling demands, unexpected events, and communication challenges to coordinate performance assessments effectively. Lastly, supervisors also consider heavy workloads as one of the challenges encountered during the teachers' performance assessment phase, making it the least practiced phase in instructional supervision. This theme suggests that heavy workloads can make it difficult for supervisors to allocate sufficient time and attention to prepare for teachers' performance assessments adequately. It may also impact their ability to provide timely and comprehensive feedback to teachers after

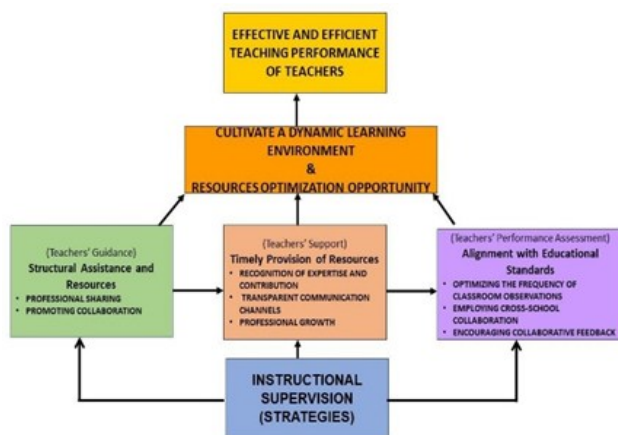
the observation. This sentiment was shared by Participant 2, explaining, “Time constraints due to the heavy workloads of teachers.” Participant 3 also shared his sentiment, stating, “Difficulty in aligning my schedule with the schedule of the teachers.” Participant 5 also shared that, “Competing priorities and responsibilities, such as administrative duties, employee supervision, and curriculum development, can impact my availability for scheduling pre-observation conferences on time.”

This theme indicates the significant amount of work or responsibilities that supervisors or observers have, which can present challenges in effectively preparing for and conducting these conferences.

Based on the provided results and findings, this study revealed that the three phases of instructional supervision were predominantly used, with performance assessment being the least used and teachers’ support the most.

Figure 2

Viloria’s Triphasic Model of Instructional Supervision



The presented findings served as a basis for crafting the framework for instructional supervisory practices of school supervisors in private sectarian secondary schools.

Viloria's Triphasic Framework of Instructional Supervision represents a meticulous examination of the complex processes

involved in overseeing and improving teaching practices within educational contexts. Named after the researcher Vilorio, this model encapsulates the essence of instructional supervision, a cornerstone of educational leadership. The term "Triphasic" signifies the framework's division into three distinct phases, each serving a unique purpose in enhancing teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Instructional Supervision Strategies are the central focus of the model, embodying the overarching goal of promoting excellence in teaching. It has a blue background because it represents the trust, clarity, and structured guidance inherent in the supervision process. School Heads and Department heads tasked with overseeing instructional practices engage in a triphasic approach encompassing "Guidance," "Support," and "Performance Assessment." Though distinct, these phases collectively contribute to educators' holistic development and to improved teaching quality.

One of the three phases of instructional supervision is the school heads' "guidance" for teachers, shown in green. The green background under this phase represents beginnings, growth, development, and planning because this is the first phase of instructional supervision. This phase is tailored to each teacher's individual needs and goals to enhance teaching effectiveness and promote student success. This phase establishes tight collaboration between instructional leaders and teachers, fostering a professional learning community. School and department heads' "guidance" for teachers is delivered through structural responses. School and department heads guide by fostering professional learning communities through professional sharing and promoting collaboration. The strategies underscore a structured agenda led by school heads, focusing on lesson planning, assigning responsibilities, employing suitable teaching strategies, and selecting relevant activities. This structure allows for flexibility in adjusting meeting frequency based on specific needs or circumstances. Moreover, commitment to fostering collaboration within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This commitment emphasizes regular engagement, subject-specific planning, and efficient use of meeting time for sharing knowledge, expertise, and experiences. Supervisors (school heads and department

heads) play a pivotal role in encouraging open communication and collaboration within PLCs, creating an environment where teachers feel at ease sharing experiences and supporting one another in addressing common challenges.

Moreover, during the quantitative phase of the study, the emergence of school heads' "Support" for teachers as the most practiced instructional supervision practice, with a red background. The red background symbolizes the developmental and supportive aspects of instructional supervision, focusing on teachers' and students' continuous improvement and growth. This phase underscores supervisors' proactive stance in bolstering teacher capacity. This emphasis reflects a commitment to providing comprehensive assistance and resources to nurture teachers' professional development and enhance instructional effectiveness. Within this phase, supervisors employ diverse strategies tailored to facilitate teachers' growth and success in the classroom.

One strategy that highlights the importance of offering support is the timely provision of resources tailored to teachers' needs. This underscores the importance of ensuring educators have access to the necessary tools, guidance, and assistance precisely when needed, thereby optimizing their ability to deliver high-quality instruction. School Heads and Department Heads aim to equip teachers with the resources and support they need to navigate challenges and excel in their roles by prioritizing timely support.

Moreover, supervisors implement specific strategies to foster effective communication, recognition, and professional growth among teachers. Transparent Communication Channels serve as a cornerstone, emphasizing the establishment of open, honest, and clear lines of communication between supervisors and teachers. This approach promotes collaboration, feedback exchange, and the sharing of insights, ultimately enhancing instructional practices and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Furthermore, the recognition of expertise and contributions is one of the strategies implemented by school heads, underscoring the importance of acknowledging and valuing teach-

ers' knowledge, skills, and contributions within the educational context. By celebrating educators' achievements and expertise, supervisors cultivate a culture of appreciation and empowerment, motivating teachers to strive for excellence and take ownership of their professional development.

Additionally, Professional Development Opportunities represent a key strategy, offering teachers avenues for ongoing learning and growth. These opportunities encompass various training, workshops, and collaborative initiatives designed to enhance teachers' instructional effectiveness and expand their pedagogical repertoire. School Heads and Department Heads empower teachers to stay abreast of emerging trends by investing in professional development, refining their practices, and ultimately optimizing student learning outcomes.

Conversely, "School Heads' Performance Assessment for Teachers" emerges as the least practiced phase, having a purple background, presenting supervisors with challenges related to observation procedures, time constraints, and heavy workloads. Purple serves as a visual cue to draw attention, emphasize its importance, and encourage school supervisors to engage more deeply with this critical component of instructional supervision. One strategy school heads use is to align everything with educational standards, underscoring the importance of ensuring assessments align with established criteria and goals, fostering consistency and effectiveness in evaluation practices.

Within the Alignment with Educational Standards, several specific strategies employed by school heads and department heads were used to enhance performance assessment. Optimizing the Frequency of Classroom Observation emphasizes the importance of regular, comprehensive observations to gauge teaching effectiveness and support professional growth accurately. School and department heads can provide timely feedback and guidance to teachers by conducting frequent observations and facilitating their ongoing development.

Moving along, cross-school Collaboration highlights the collaborative efforts of school and department heads from different schools to exchange insights and resources, enriching the assessment process and fostering consistency in standards

across educational institutions. Through collaborative endeavors, supervisors can leverage collective expertise and experiences to enhance the quality and reliability of performance assessments.

Progressing further, encouraging collaborative feedback underscores the significance of soliciting input from various stakeholders to enrich the feedback process and promote continuous improvement in teaching practices. By embracing collaborative feedback mechanisms, supervisors can gather diverse perspectives and insights, leading to more comprehensive and constructive teacher performance assessments.

The implications of this framework extend beyond research to practical application in educational settings. By emphasizing timely support and comprehensive assessment, supervisors can cultivate a dynamic learning environment and optimize resource allocation. Cultivating a Learning Dynamic Environment and Resource Optimization Opportunity has an orange background because it is known to stimulate mental enhancement and communication, which is believed to be achieved when school heads properly implement instructional supervision. It also symbolizes the motivating and energizing role of instructional supervision, aiming to inspire and uplift educators in their professional journey. Furthermore, the model underscores the importance of effective and efficient teaching performance by teachers with a gold background.

Gold background symbolizes high achievement, excellence, quality, and success, making it a fitting color to represent the pinnacle of teaching performance. With a gold background, school heads and department heads not only celebrate and acknowledge teachers' hard work and success but also create an aspirational standard that others can strive to achieve. As educational leaders navigate the complexities of instructional supervision, this model is valuable for promoting teacher growth and fostering a culture of excellence within schools and educational institutions.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine the extent to which supervisors in the private sectarian secondary schools of La Union implement the three instructional supervisory phases. Supervisors typically use a diverse range of instructional supervision methods, reflecting a wide array of strategies for supervising their teachers during classroom instruction. Supervisors implement the three phases of instructional supervision to varying degrees within their organizations, demonstrating their active involvement in overseeing teachers and their flexibility in using effective methods. The results indicated that school heads regularly engaged in instructional supervision practices, particularly in teacher guidance, support, and performance assessment, yet these practices were not fully implemented.

Moreover, it suggests that supervisors consider adapting the diverse instructional supervisory practices required for effective supervision accordingly. The results also indicated that supervisors encountered several challenges during their supervisory duties, which hindered their supervision. Moreover, this finding underscores their adherence to the guidelines outlined in RA 9155, PPSH, DO 42, S2017, and DO 25, S2020, striving for supervisors to play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of education at the regional, divisional, or school levels, in which supervisors should act as learning catalysts, teacher motivators, and knowledge sharers through instructional supervision.

This finding resonates with previous research by Haramain and Sumapal (2023), which similarly highlights the use of a variety of instructional supervision practices of supervisors along the three phases of supervision when supervising their teachers. Similarly, Billones and Sumapal (2019) reveal that instructional supervision practices were conducted and observed by the supervisors. However, supervisors also faced several challenges during their supervisory duties, and most of these hindered the success of supervision and affected the entire school and classroom instructional performance. According to Ngole and Mkulu (2021), supervisors must refine their leadership practices to achieve optimal effectiveness, thereby enhancing the teaching and learning processes of their teachers and students.

Additionally, their study noted that a competent leader possesses the capacity to discern the obstacles encountered by both students and teachers and to seek viable solutions. Thus, to enhance their effectiveness, supervisors must guide, support, and assess their teachers' performance. Additionally, the observed instructional supervision practices can be contextualized through the lens of the Developmental Supervision Theory, which suggests that a collaborative process must occur between a more experienced educator (the supervisor) and a less experienced educator (the supervisee) to enhance the supervisee's professional growth and effectiveness. This theoretical framework explains the three phases of instructional supervision: guidance, support, and performance assessment, which a supervisor must go through to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Teacher's Guidance

Supervisors most often employ guidance in instructional supervision, making it the second most practiced of the three phases of instructional supervision. Based on the Developmental Supervision Theory, this phase of developmental supervision includes helping the teacher set developmental goals, prepare, and plan; sharing best practices and strategies; and mentoring and coaching the teacher to improve and attain his/her professional goals. This implies that supervisors actively facilitate their teachers' professional growth and development. This also suggests that school heads play a crucial role in fostering a supportive and growth-oriented environment where teachers can thrive and continuously enhance their teaching practices. This phase of instructional supervision indicates that supervisors serve as guides and coordinators, mediating between teachers and educational objectives to improve teaching and learning processes.

The study's findings align with previous studies by Basilio (2021), Haramain and Sumapal (2023), and Sunaryo (2020), which found that guidance is the second-most-practiced phase of instructional supervision. Sunaryo (2020) underscores that supervisors aim to improve the teaching and learning process by helping teachers set developmental goals that have a positive, significant effect on changes in teacher performance and professional growth. Basilio (2021) also underscores that regular mon-

itoring and guidance of teachers leads to a more engaging learning environment. Haramanin and Sumapal (2023) emphasize that the supervisors' role in setting instructional goals, providing guidance, and ensuring effective educational strategies are in place is crucial for meeting the needs of diverse learners and promoting good teaching practices.

In addition, supervisors, as highlighted by U-Sayee and Adomako (2021), must provide direct guidance and leadership to ensure teachers align with organizational goals. This is because teachers play a crucial role in achieving educational goals, emphasizing the need for continuous development in professionalism and performance (Wardani et al., 2021). Karim et al. (2021) stress the pivotal role of teacher competencies and principal support in enhancing teacher performance through effective supervision, aligning with the overarching theme's emphasis on supervision. Through supervision, teachers can refine their teaching practices to help students produce high-quality outputs (Hakim et al., 2020).

In this phase, supervisors consistently practice fostering collaboration among teachers, particularly by facilitating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or similar structures, during the guidance phase of instructional supervision. This indicator, along with the teachers' guidance phase, got the highest rate. By actively promoting teachers' self-development and supporting these collaborative initiatives, supervisors create an environment conducive to mutual learning and professional growth. Through this approach, supervisors not only enhance teachers' professional development but also cultivate a sense of community and shared purpose within the school, ultimately leading to improved teaching practices and student outcomes. Additionally, the main reason supervisors conduct PLCs is to create a collaborative learning community that enhances student engagement and aligns goals and priorities. This emphasizes the importance of creating a collaborative learning community where educators work together to align goals and priorities to enhance student engagement.

Based on the researcher's data analysis, supervisors consider providing structural support and resources through profes-

sional sharing. This theme encompasses the provision of structural support and resources by school heads to facilitate PLCs. It includes allocating time in the school schedule for PLC meetings.

The finding supports the study by Abbaspour et al. (2024), which revealed that principals play a pivotal role in guiding teachers by promoting their self-development and professional sharing. Antinluoma et al. (2021) note that principals played a major role in advancing schools through professional sharing. The study further explained that professional sharing practices through PLCs were reported to have many positive effects, strengthening instruction, learning, and support. Supervisors' support, human resources, and enabling structures must be secured for it to succeed. According to Sinnayah et al. (2023), PLCs refined their teaching practices and encouraged a collaborative culture that often leads to professional development. This emphasizes that there is a structured agenda set by school heads, focusing on lesson planning, allocation of responsibilities, inclusion of appropriate teaching strategies, and selection of relevant activities, with flexibility to adjust the frequency based on specific needs or circumstances.

Moreover, based on the researcher's data analysis, supervisors consider structural assistance and resources through promoting collaboration. This theme emphasizes that PLCs improve students' learning experience, particularly through the development of high-quality lesson plans and assessments. These emphasize that supervisors encourage a culture of open communication and collaboration within PLCs, where teachers feel comfortable sharing their experiences and supporting one another in addressing common challenges.

Similarly, Printy and Liu (2021) found that guiding teachers by promoting collaboration during PLCs helps improve student learning through collegial interactions and professional support. With the guidance of the supervisors, teachers collaborate to ensure that all students learn at high levels. This practice encompasses peers helping peers. According to Baffour-Awuah (2011), as cited by Kholid and Rohmantika (2019), supervision can improve classroom practices and lead to student success by

enhancing teachers' professional growth and work performance. Additionally, Lin et al. (2018) stress that teachers, guided by supervisors, work with their peers, collect and analyze classroom data, share best practices, and make instructional decisions as a team. As supervisors foster PLCs within the school organization, teachers engage in deeper learning as teaching professionals to better meet their students' needs. Furthermore, Haiyan and Allan (2018) stressed the importance of principal commitment and active involvement in spearheading PLC initiatives, alongside the need for sustained support and monitoring to ensure the longevity of PLCs.

On the other hand, the school supervisors in this study's least practiced indicator under teachers' guidance is assisting teachers in crafting lesson plans and syllabi to determine strategies that best work in the teaching and learning process, and to outline specific strategies and timelines for achieving their goals. This means that supervisors, on average, are slightly less involved in this indicator than others, and that they give slightly less emphasis or attention to assisting teachers in developing their action plans. This suggests it is not being prioritized or implemented effectively by school supervisors. This could indicate a gap in guidance or a need for improvement in the supervision practices within the educational setting.

While actively engaged in various aspects of instructional supervision, supervisors may need to place greater emphasis on assisting teachers in developing and implementing lesson plans and syllabi. The fact that this indicator is the least practiced among the teachers' guidance phase indicators suggests a potential gap in the guidance supervisors provide to help teachers set and achieve their instructional goals. This shortfall may stem from various factors, such as competing demands on supervisors' time and resources or a lack of awareness of the importance of action planning in driving teacher effectiveness. Addressing this gap requires supervisors to prioritize and invest more effort in collaborating with teachers to develop actionable strategies and timelines for improving teaching and learning outcomes. By doing so, supervisors can better guide teachers in their professional growth journey, ultimately enhancing instructional quality and student achievement within their schools.

Sustainability and follow-through are some of the reasons why supervisors have difficulty assisting teachers in crafting lesson plans and syllabi. This underscores the complexity of lesson planning and syllabus development in education, emphasizing the need for educators to be adaptable, resourceful, and responsive to the dynamic nature of teaching and learning environments.

Moreover, differing needs and priorities are among the challenges school heads face when assisting teachers in crafting lesson plans and syllabi. This challenge arises because teachers have distinct teaching styles, educational philosophies, and classroom dynamics, leading to differing preferences and approaches in lesson planning. This indicates a struggle to balance administrative responsibilities with the need to support teachers in their professional development and implementation of action plans. Moreover, these statements highlight the difficulty of supervising teachers in crafting lesson plans, given time constraints. The administrator expresses that heavy workloads make it challenging to assist teachers in creating their action plans, particularly when there is a specific format or framework to follow. This finding validates Ampofo et al. (2019), in which school supervisors in Ghana have inadequate supervision of lesson preparation and action plans done by teachers that affect the teacher's role performance. Similarly, a study by Akib and Mushin (2019) emphasizes that supervisors' inadequate time spent supervising teachers in crafting their action plans led to a decline in Nigeria's overall educational system. Additionally, the study by Chiwamba et al. (2022) revealed that heads of schools demonstrated a significant understanding of their supervisory instructional duties but did not effectively engage teachers in improving professional skills, especially in assisting teachers in crafting their action plans. School supervisors should regularly review teachers' lessons and action plans to ensure quality education for learners (Michael, 2019).

Supervisors, most of the time, are highly skilled teachers' support. The high level of support provided by supervisors during instructional supervision in private sectarian secondary schools creates a positive, nurturing environment for teachers. With teachers' support highly practiced by supervisors, it is evi-

dent that supervisors prioritize supporting teachers in their professional development. This implies that teachers in these schools receive consistent and substantial support, fostering a culture of collaboration, growth, and continuous improvement. Such proactive involvement from supervisors can have far-reaching implications, including increased teacher morale, enhanced instructional quality, and, ultimately, improved student outcomes. By recognizing and valuing the importance of teacher support, private sectarian secondary schools are likely to cultivate a more conducive and empowering educational environment, benefiting both educators and students alike.

Based on the researcher's data analysis, supervisors consider cultivating a dynamic learning environment as the reason they prioritize providing support to teachers within the framework of instructional supervision. This theme includes enhancing instructional effectiveness, creating a learning culture, and promoting self-efficacy and autonomy. These themes explain why teachers' support was regarded as the most frequently practiced phase of instructional supervision among private sectarian secondary school supervisors. This collectively highlights a focus on enhancing teachers' capabilities through professional development opportunities such as seminars and workshops. By investing in their teachers' continuous learning and growth, they seek to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver quality education.

The finding supports the study by David et al. (2021), which highlighted the importance of teachers' support in instructional supervision, where instructional supervision practices of educational supervisors significantly improve teachers' professional competence, making them more effective for the benefit of learners. The learners' attainment is determined by the quality of teaching, which depends on the effectiveness of the instructional supervision provided by the department head teacher and the school principal. It was also highlighted in the study by Ngloe and Mklulu (2020) that effective instructional supervision was found to be the key factor for academic performance in schools, and that instructional supervision should be ongoing, focused on teacher support and learners' needs.

Additionally, in this phase, supervisors always practice listening to and responding to teachers' concerns, making it the indicator with the highest score in this phase. This means supervisors are good at listening to teachers and helping them with their problems. This can make teachers feel more confident and better about themselves when they're teaching. This shows that school supervisors are doing their best to inspire and motivate teachers and are also sharing new ways to teach by talking with them. When they listen to and respond to teachers' concerns, it shows they're there to help and make the school a good place for teaching and learning. Supervisors prioritize recognizing and appreciating the hard work and achievements of teachers, actively acknowledging the valuable contributions they make to the school community.

The finding supports the study of Haramain and Sumapal (2023), which revealed that having a supportive school supervisor can make a significant difference for teachers. When instructional leaders are aware of what is happening in the teaching and learning environment, they are better able and willing to provide the necessary resources and materials that support teachers' instructional efforts. Therefore, the support and responsiveness of school heads to teachers' concerns are crucial for enhancing instructional practices. Similarly, the study by Emanuel and Mwila (2023) revealed that supervision itself increased partnership between teachers and school-based supervisors. Teachers perceive internal supervision as an opportunity for them to discuss teaching and learning challenges. The study found that teachers needed more opportunities for improvement, but this could be achieved if they were actively involved in supervision.

Moreover, the provided finding can be explained by the qualitative data that supervisors listen to and respond to teachers' concerns. Supervisors use the strategy of establishing transparent communication channels to support teachers. This refers to establishing clear and open lines of communication between school supervisors and teachers. This theme emphasizes the importance of creating an environment where information flows freely, feedback is welcome, and concerns are addressed openly and honestly. Transparent communication channels enable

teachers to express their thoughts, share ideas, seek assistance, and provide feedback on various aspects of their professional development and teaching practices. This suggests that the school supervisors prioritize open communication and support for their teachers' well-being and professional growth. Also, it indicates that supervisors value teachers' input and perspectives, creating an environment where teachers feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, ideas, and challenges. They commit to supporting teachers and ensuring that their needs are heard and addressed promptly.

These statements further underscore that the supervisors see themselves not only as professional mentors but also as sources of personal support. This finding validates the study of Haramain and Sumapal (2023), which revealed that secondary school supervisors are good at listening to teachers and helping them with their problems. This can make teachers feel really good about themselves and more confident in their teaching. It's like the principals are trying hard to inspire and encourage teachers by talking to them and trying out new ideas together. When principals listen and respond to teachers, it makes them feel supported and makes the whole school a better place to teach and learn.

In addition, during this phase, supervisors highly practice working closely with teachers to identify areas of their teaching practice that could benefit from improvement. This means that although most of the time they employ this practice in supervising their teachers, not all the time do supervisors work closely with teachers to collaborate and pinpoint areas of their teaching practice that could be enhanced. The school supervisor must work closely with teachers and provide support to help build a professional learning community.

The finding resonates with the study by Ozcan (2020), which revealed that when school supervisors support teachers closely and professionally, they offer constructive criticism of teachers' in-class professional competencies, appreciate teachers' knowledge and competencies, and provide an open channel for communication. Moreover, Haramain and Sumapal (2023) emphasized that integrating teacher support can foster a culture

of professional growth and improvement in schools. It is clear from the findings that monitoring classroom work and assessing the entire teaching and learning process should be a continuous exercise if the objective of enhancing students' learning outcomes and teachers' professional efficiency is to be achieved. (Sule et al., 2018)

On the other hand, supervisors working closely with teachers to identify specific areas of their teaching practice that could benefit from improvement were identified as the lowest indicator along the teachers' support phase. Workload pressures can lead to stress, overwhelm, and difficulty managing one's workload effectively. These pressures can arise from various sources, such as high task volume, tight deadlines, administrative duties, meetings, or productivity expectations. Supervisors attribute this low rating to limited opportunities for them to observe teachers in action. Because they have fewer chances to observe teaching practices directly, supervisors find it challenging to identify and address specific areas where teachers could enhance their effectiveness. This implies that participants are struggling to allocate sufficient time to the important aspects of their roles as educators or supervisors.

Teachers' Performance Assessment

Supervisors regard performance assessment as highly practiced, yet it is the least practiced of the three phases of instructional supervision. This means that private sectarian secondary school supervisors frequently practice assessments to work collaboratively with teachers to set goals, monitor progress, and adjust instructional strategies as needed to enhance teaching effectiveness and student achievement. In this instructional supervision phase, the teacher and supervisor discuss the results and constructive feedback of the class observation. Instructional supervision plays a pivotal role in evaluating and enhancing teachers' effectiveness within educational settings. Through this process, administrators and instructional leaders observe and assess teachers' instructional methods, offering valuable feedback and assistance. The primary objective is to ensure that teachers deliver instruction effectively, align with curriculum standards, and foster student learning. Performance

assessment involves systematically collecting data on various aspects of teaching, including lesson planning, instructional techniques, classroom management, and student involvement. Supervisors employ diverse assessment approaches such as classroom observations, analysis of student work, and teacher self-assessment to gather comprehensive evidence of teachers' performance.

This finding supports the study of Basilio (2021), which revealed that instructional supervision systematically entails evaluating teachers' effectiveness in delivering instruction, meeting curriculum standards, and fostering student learning. According to Maisyaroh et al. (2021), supervisors must conduct comprehensive evaluations by observing classroom instruction, assessing student work, and examining lesson plans to collect evidence of teachers' performance. Moreover, in the performance assessment phase of instructional supervision, the teacher is always invited to a session to discuss strengths, weaknesses, and emergent issues prayerfully after the observation (Basilio, 2021). On the other hand, based on the researcher's data analysis, the performance assessment is considered the least practiced phase of instructional supervision, as it involves careful observation, analysis, and feedback, and is therefore complex and challenging. This phase, which often requires significant time, resources, and expertise, and often faces constraints, has a significant impact on supervisors' ability to carry out instructional supervision effectively.

Among the three phases of instructional supervision, the performance assessment phase is the least practiced. In addition, the supervisors consider resource optimization opportunities as a factor that limits their ability to prioritize and invest in teachers' performance assessment. This theme includes time constraints and high-volume tasks. These explain why the teachers' performance assessment was regarded as the least practiced phase in instructional supervision among private sectarian secondary school supervisors. Also, the findings collectively highlight the challenges supervisors encounter in effectively implementing the performance assessment phase of instructional supervision. This finding resonates with the study by Msuya and Mwila (2023), which found that students' academic achievement

is influenced by supervisory practices such as classroom visits, teacher mentoring, assessing teachers' pedagogical abilities, assisting teachers in creating lesson plans, and other creative teaching methods. However, unfriendly working conditions, including a lack of facilities, funding, and dedicated teachers, make it difficult for school heads to carry out their supervisory duties.

This finding supports the study by Allida et al. (2018), which revealed that the supervisor set the purpose, focus, and method of the observation to be used during the pre-conference. These resolutions provide direction and clarity to the whole process. This stage also helps the supervisor and the teacher to connect and establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect. Pre-conferencing conditions teachers to do their best, thus shielding supervisors from identifying their needs. Also, according to Terra and Berhanu (2019), instructional supervisors were not consistently providing teachers with the necessary support for professional and curriculum development. The study further indicates that, rather than focusing more on academic support, supervisors devoted their time to administrative tasks. Furthermore, in the study conducted by Abera and Ayalew (2020), instructional supervisors encountered various challenges that hindered the effective implementation of supervision. These challenges included difficulties in selecting suitable individuals for supervisory roles, a lack of supervision manuals, insufficient budgets, facilities, and materials, teachers' resistance to supervision due to unawareness of its importance, principals' overwhelming workloads, and inadequate training for supervisors.

In the performance assessment phase of instructional supervision, ensuring that teachers' classroom priorities are consistent with the goals and directions of the school received the highest weighted average. This finding indicates that school supervisors strongly urge teachers to ensure that what they do in their classrooms aligns with the school's overall aims. When teachers align their priorities with the school's goals, they become more effective teachers, ultimately leading to better learning outcomes for students. This further underscores the importance of collaboration and alignment between teachers and the school's broader objectives in fostering student success.

Moreover, the finding can be further explained by the qualitative data, which indicate that optimizing the frequency of classroom observation focuses on verifying that the content taught by teachers aligns with the prescribed curriculum standards. The findings indicate that supervisors need to ensure teachers' performance aligns with established educational standards, thereby contributing to high-quality education and student success. This further underscores that supervisors evaluate how teachers assess student learning to ensure that assessment practices are fair, reliable, and aligned with educational standards. They track educational outcomes to gauge the effectiveness of teachers' instruction in achieving desired learning goals. This implies that supervisors play a crucial role in promoting a culture of continuous improvement among teachers by fostering reflection, collaboration, and professional growth. Supervisors need to assess the effectiveness of teachers' chosen teaching methodologies in facilitating student learning, including observing classroom instruction to determine whether teachers are employing strategies that are appropriate to the subject matter and conducive to student engagement and understanding.

The finding resonates with the studies of Allida et al. (2018), who highlighted the importance of regular classroom observation, a practice frequently conducted by private-sector principals to monitor teachers' adherence to the curriculum, provide feedback, ensure the appropriate use of instructional aids, and follow up on previous instructions. This supervision helps teachers improve punctuality and teaching methods (Amin et al., 2022), aligning with Ubogu (2020) and Mwaniki and Guantai's (2018) assertion that frequent instructional supervision contributes to instructional enhancement and teacher professional development. Moreover, Allida et al. (2018) emphasized the need for regular classroom observation, which they said should not be done only when needed. The study also concluded that there is a need to implement training programs to enhance the practices of principals and teachers in effective, contemporary instructional supervision (Suleiman et al., 2020).

Conversely, pointing out specific strengths in teachers' instructional practices in post-observation feedback received the lowest rating but is still considered highly practiced. Despite its

lower rating, this finding emphasizes that school supervisors still see strengths in how teachers teach, especially when they give feedback after observing classes. This feedback lets principals check how well their advice is working. This feedback aims to help teachers grow, solve problems, and improve their teaching. The results show that supervisors are recognizing teachers' strengths and offering guidance to improve teaching and learning. By addressing any weak points during evaluations, teaching, and learning can get even better. It's important for supervisors to accurately see how well each teacher is doing and have a way to keep improving things regularly.

This finding can be further explained by the qualitative data, which indicate that supervisors also ensure teacher engagement in reflective dialogue, especially during the performance assessment phase of instructional supervision. This refers to teachers and observers reflecting on the teaching methods, student interactions, classroom management strategies, and overall effectiveness in delivering the curriculum. The findings indicate that supervisors offer constructive feedback, share observations, and collaboratively explore solutions to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

The finding supports the study by Guamos and Jalos (2023), which revealed that internal issues such as poor supervisory skills, communication gaps, and rigid rule imposition directly impede effective supervision and potentially contribute to conflicts within the school community. Notably, the absence of essential post-conference after every class observation has a significant impact on teachers' performance, student achievement, and the school community. It is also in consonance with the study of Lyonga (2018), which revealed that supervision practices need to provide immediate feedback and tangible ways to assist a teacher in performing better in the teaching-learning process and in supporting his/her professional development. As such, effective supervision helps teachers improve their work performance, develop the ability and confidence they need in classroom practice, and ensure professional growth and teacher quality. In addition, according to Sumapal and Haramain (2023), supervisors demonstrate dedication to improving teaching practices and fostering professional growth by motivating

teachers to align their goals with those of the school and by acknowledging their strengths through feedback following observations. Through effective supervision and constructive feedback, supervisors can support teachers' ongoing development, resulting in better teaching and learning outcomes across the school.

The quantitative and qualitative findings presented in this study served as the basis for formulating a proposed instructional supervisory plan for school supervisors and key teachers in private sectarian secondary schools. This plan is designed to provide a structured framework for supervising and improving teaching and learning practices within an educational institution. It aims to improve their practices in assessing teachers' performance during instructional supervision.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this research provides useful information, it does have some limitations to consider. First of all, the results might be relevant only to the context of school heads and department heads at private sectarian secondary schools and not transferable to other types of schools. Also, the study examined a narrow group of respondents – just principals with at least 3 years of experience and teachers from private sectarian secondary schools within a single province. This may mean that their experiences don't fully represent the views of all school heads in similar schools. Additionally, because the study relied on teacher feedback validation, it may capture only a limited view of how school leaders supervise their teachers. Finally, it considered only how school heads and department heads supervise, using three established phases, without accounting for personal factors or experiences that could alter their supervision.

The study's limitations, however, open the door to further research. Future work could examine a wider range of school administrators, including heads of public secondary and elementary schools, across a broader geographic scope. It would be valuable to understand supervision practices across a variety of educational settings, from private schools to colleges and universities. Comparative studies might look at supervision techniques used by different administrative groups.

Moreover, additional research could pay closer attention to the factors that shape how leaders supervise teachers, such as individual characteristics and experiences, situational variables, leadership approaches, and the various policies and challenges they face. Understanding which aspects of supervision are most strongly linked to different supervision practices can shed light on what makes supervision most effective. Including input from teachers and other involved parties can provide a fuller picture of supervision and help develop more comprehensive approaches. Finally, while this study examined supervision strategies in detail through a qualitative lens, further quantitative research could assess how common these strategies are for enhancing learning, improving teaching effectiveness, and ensuring timely resource provision in schools. The results presented in this study served as the basis for formulating the proposed instructional supervisory plan for teachers and school heads/ department heads of private sectarian secondary schools. This instructional supervisory plan responds to the growing need for effective instructional supervision in educational settings. It provides a structured framework for guiding, supporting, and assessing teachers' instructional performance, emphasizing the development of their collaborative approaches. It aims to effectively allocate resources, provide targeted support, and implement evidence-based practices to improve instructional quality.

Additionally, an instructional supervisory plan helps establish clear expectations, accountability measures, and professional development opportunities for educators, ultimately fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence in teaching. The instructional supervisory plan was subjected to internal validation by the panel members, after which it was externally validated by experts composed of school heads, master teachers, and district supervisors who hold doctorate degrees. Based on their evaluation, the instructional supervisory plan was found highly valid, with a validity rating of 4.93. The validators' comments and suggestions were incorporated into the enhancement training.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated instructional supervision practices at Catholic Schools in the Diocese of La Union, employing a mixed-method approach. Quantitative findings revealed varying degrees of adherence to the instructional supervision phases, with a strong emphasis on teacher support rather than performance assessment. Challenges in executing performance assessments were noted due to their resource-intensive nature. Strategies employed included resource provision, transparent communication, and alignment with educational standards, aimed at enhancing teaching quality and fostering a supportive environment.

School supervisors play a crucial role in instructional supervision, going beyond oversight to nurture a conducive environment for teachers' professional growth. Adopting a constructive approach involving feedback and mentorship can empower educators and improve student outcomes. Emphasizing a dynamic learning environment and resource optimization underscores the essence of instructional supervision, fostering continuous improvement and innovation. The developed Comprehensive Triphasic Model of Instructional Supervision offers insights into improving teaching effectiveness and student learning achievements.

Implications suggest crafting instructional supervisory plans to delineate roles and expectations, and promote coherence and effectiveness. An effective supervisory blueprint involves organized evaluations and joint goal-setting for impactful supervision. Recommendations include implementing the instructional supervision strategy outlined in the study and exploring potential research directions to deepen understanding and refine supervisory practices.

The paper's utilization in Diocesan schools entails disseminating findings and implementing the instructional supervisory plan for both supervisors and teachers. This involves communication with Diocesan schools to facilitate integration, emphasizing the importance of organized evaluation and joint efforts to enhance teaching quality and student outcomes.

This research underscores the ever-evolving nature of educational administration, where adaptability and innovation are key. As schools strive to meet the diverse needs of learners in an increasingly complex world, effective instructional supervision emerges as a cornerstone for driving positive change. By embracing collaborative approaches and leveraging research-based strategies, educational leaders can pave the way for a brighter future in education, one where every student has the opportunity to thrive.

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