

Exploring Cultural Attitude and Nature Relatedness Among Indigenous People

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between cultural views and nature relatedness among Indigenous Peoples in Polillo, Quezon. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from 40 respondents. Results revealed that participants strongly upheld positive cultural values and ecological awareness, reflecting a deep sense of cultural identity. However, regression analysis showed that only age and sex significantly predicted nature relatedness, with older individuals and women demonstrating stronger connections with nature. Cultural attitude and educational attainment showed no significant influence. These findings suggest that while Indigenous cultural values align with ecological consciousness, demographic factors play a more crucial role in shaping nature relatedness. The results support the Biophilia Hypothesis and Self-Determination Theory, emphasizing how intrinsic motivation and lived experiences foster human–nature connection.

Keywords: Cultural Attitude, Nature Relatedness, Indigenous People.

INTRODUCTION

Culture influences an individual's identity, conduct, and perspective. Cultural ideas, values, conventions, and traditions are intricately woven into the way of life of Indigenous Peoples (IPs), encompassing their relationship with the natural world. Toigo et al. (2022b) asserts that culture influences individuals' values, behaviors, and interpretations of their surroundings. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), via CMO No. 2, s. 2019, acknowledged this cultural significance by incorporating Indigenous Peoples' Studies into higher education curricula to enhance cultural identity, ancestral domain rights, and self- governance, as highlighted in RA 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act. Initial interviews done by the researchers indicate a significant decrease in the engagement of Indigenous Peoples in cultural events and traditional practices in Barangay Taluong, Polillo, Quezon. Sumitro et al. (2024) emphasized the vital role of Indigenous Peoples as cultural makers in perpetuating local culture, whereas Nicholas (2021) highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by Filipino Indigenous groups in preserving their rich traditions.

Although numerous studies have confirmed the essential role of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in nature conservation and biodiversity protection through their local knowledge and practices (Abas et al., 2022; Keaulana et al., 2021), research on the specific cultural attitudes and degree of nature-relatedness among IP communities in particular regions, such as Polillo, Quezon, remains insufficient. Niigaaniin and MacNeill (2022) highlighted that Indigenous traditions and environmental practices are interconnected through rituals, rites, and oral narratives, which cultivate reverence for nature. Lugo-Espinosa et al. (2024) noted that globalization, migration, and insufficient land rights have led to the deterioration of cultural practices. This signifies a necessity for specialized research to investigate the persistence and practice of these links in tiny, rural communities. The deficiency in community-specific knowledge hinders a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Indigenous cultural identity on contemporary environmental stewardship.

This study is essential for comprehending the contemporary cultural perspectives and environmental relationships of Indigenous Peoples in Barangay Taluong, Polillo, Quezon. The objectives are to: (1) evaluate

the degree of cultural attitude regarding recognition of cultural values, linkages, preservation of traditions and customs, and cultural Loss; (2) assess the extent of nature relatedness; (3) analyze the correlation between cultural attitude and nature-relatedness; finally, (4) To determine the significant difference considering the following moderating variables: age, sex, and educational attainment. This study examines how entrenched cultural values influence environmental stewardship, informed by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation and cultural identity in behavior, and the Biophilia Hypothesis (Wilson, 1984), which posits an inherent human inclination to engage with nature. This study examines the prevailing cultural attitudes and environmental relationships of the Indigenous People community in Polillo, Quezon. This initiative seeks to bolster the preservation of Indigenous knowledge and traditions by exploring the intricacies of their cultural identity and environmental values. The results can inform culturally responsive educational initiatives—such as those endorsed by CHED (2019)—and foster cultural contemplation and continuity among the youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Attitude

The identity of indigenous communities is shaped not only by their lived experiences and indigenous narratives but also by external forces such as national policies and societal norms. As Luza (2023) explains, internal factors emerge from the indigenous peoples' own worldview, rooted in organic culture and traditional knowledge, while external factors include state policies such as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA), which institutionalizes their rights and recognition.

However, indigenous cultural values—which serve as both identity markers and moral compasses—are increasingly at risk of erosion in island communities, signaling a weakening of cultural identity (Titaley & Watloly, 2021). Huynh, Gasparatos, Su, Lam, Grant, and Fukushima (2022) explained that cultural practices have declined due to factors like species loss and limited access to traditional resources, which have altered songs, work patterns, and ceremonies. These changes have disrupted cultural identity as communities shift their livelihoods and elders lose their connection to the land. The authors also noted that displacement and relocation weaken people's sense of place, while even those who remain experience solastalgia—a profound grief caused by drastic environmental changes, threatening their sense of belonging and stability.

Achieving civilizational exchange in international communication requires recognizing shared values—particularly universal human happiness—as the “greatest common divisor” of understanding between different cultures (Dehong, 2024). Similarly, Schultz et al. (2022) highlight that cultural values are essential to community engagement and the long-term success of ecological restoration efforts.

Despite these challenges, cultural values remain essential, not only for preserving indigenous heritage but also in influencing contemporary behaviors, such as promoting environmental stewardship and sustainable consumption, as shown in the work of Chakraborty and Sadachar (2022). Furthermore, the cultural practices of indigenous groups, such as those in San Emilio, Ilocos Sur, reflect deep ancestral ties and spiritual reverence, reinforcing the importance of tradition in the continuity of indigenous identity (Absolor et al., 2023).

Nature Relatedness

Rooted in cultural identity and spiritual belief, the connection of Indigenous Peoples to nature transcends mere resource dependence and reflects a holistic worldview grounded in respect, reciprocity, and sacredness. Among the Kasepuhan of Indonesia, environmental practices are shaped by local wisdom passed through generations, treating nature as a living, integral part of life rather than an object of exploitation (Pudjiastuti et al., 2021).

In the Philippine context, indigenous communities such as the Blaan regard natural phenomena as manifestations of ancestral spirits, indicating a spiritual ecology where nature is deeply embedded in cultural traditions and belief systems (Franca & Lumogdang, 2022). In the

Cordillera highlands, the valuation of ecosystem services extends beyond subsistence, encompassing cultural

and regulatory functions, with perceptions differing according to age, gender, and livelihood, thereby revealing the complexity of indigenous ecological knowledge (Paing et al., 2022). Huynh et al. (2022) explain that cultural practices encompass a wide range of human interactions with nature, such as expressing creativity, caregiving, and using natural resources for leisure and sustenance.

Current findings further emphasize the importance of conservation strategies that incorporate cultural heritage, especially in indigenous territories where biodiversity and tradition intersect (Tanalgo et al., 2025). Similarly, Indigenous worldviews such as that of the Māori illustrate how cultural identity enhances ecological consciousness and environmental attitudes, reinforcing the idea that nature relatedness is a deeply internalized and culturally informed disposition (Tassell-Matamua et al., 2020).

Materials And Methods

1. **Research Design:** This study employs a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the cultural attitudes and nature-relatedness of indigenous people in Polillo Quezon. A descriptive approach is appropriate as it aims to systematically measure and describe the levels of cultural linkages, cultural loss, recognition of cultural values, preservation of tradition and custom, as well as their connection to nature. This non- experimental design is suitable for addressing the research objectives by providing a clear snapshot of the current cultural and environmental perspectives of the indigenous community.
2. **Participants/Data Sources:** The participants of the study were indigenous people from Barangay Taluong, Polillo, Quezon, aged 18 and above. A total of 40 participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure inclusion of individuals with direct cultural experience and connection to nature. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and participants were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation in accordance with ethical standards.
3. **Tools and Instruments:** The study used two adapted questionnaires as primary data-gathering tools. The first, adapted from Choi and Kim (2007), titled “Assessing Cultural Values: Developing an Attitudinal Scale,” had a reported Cronbach’s alpha of 0.83 and measured cultural linkages, value recognition, and tradition preservation. The second, adapted from Nisbet (2011), “Happiness is in Our Nature: Exploring Nature Relatedness as a Contributor to Subjective Well-Being,” also had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.83 and assessed levels of nature relatedness. Both used a 4-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).
4. **Procedures:** The study followed a systematic procedure beginning with the preparation phase, which involved securing ethical clearance from the university research ethics committee and obtaining permission from the chieftain of the indigenous group in Barangay Taluong, Polillo, Quezon. After approval, the adapted questionnaires were finalized and pilot-tested for clarity and reliability.

During data collection, participants were selected using simple random sampling and were asked to complete the survey only after signing an informed consent form that explained the study’s purpose, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time. The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to ensure comprehension and accuracy of responses.

All data were treated with strict confidentiality, and participants’ identities were kept anonymous. The collected responses were organized and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, and percentage to address the research objectives.

5. **Analysis Techniques:** The collected data were analyzed using quantitative methods to align with the study’s aim of exploring the relationship between cultural attitude and nature relatedness among indigenous people in Quezon Province. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize participants’ demographic profiles and levels of cultural attitude and nature relatedness. Pearson’s r correlation determined the relationship between the two main variables, while one-way ANOVA tested for significant differences across demographic groups. Multiple regression analysis with interaction terms was further applied to examine whether age, sex, and educational attainment moderated the relationship between cultural attitude and nature relatedness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Descriptive Analysis

This subsection explored the level of the respondents' cultural attitude and nature relatedness.

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, Scaled Response, and Verbal Interpretation

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cultural attitude Strongly Disagree / Deeply Rooted		
Recognition of Cultural Values	1.48	0.55
Linkages	1.88	0.63
Preservation of custom and tradition	1.64	0.60
Cultural Loss	2.46	0.73
Nature Relatedness Strongly Disagree/Strongly Connected		
	1.46	0.41

Table 1, based on negatively framed statements from the research instrument, reveals that Indigenous People in Polillo, Quezon primarily endorse positive cultural values and a strong connection to nature. The low mean scores on indicators such as recognition of cultural values ($M = 1.48$), linkages ($M = 1.88$), and preservation of tradition and customs ($M = 1.64$) imply a rejection of negative cultural assertions, demonstrating that respondents persist in valuing, acknowledging, and sustaining their cultural identity. Although the cultural loss score is moderately high ($M = 2.46$), reflecting some recognition of cultural decline, the overall results indicate a community that is committed to valuing and safeguarding its Indigenous heritage. Conversely, the low mean of overall nature relatedness ($M = 1.46$) signifies a strong alignment with nature-connected behaviors and perspectives, demonstrating enduring ecological consciousness and affiliation.

Indigenous cultures across various contexts demonstrate a profound connection between cultural identity and nature-relatedness. Niigaaniin and MacNeill (2022) found that Indigenous Anishinaabe communities in Canada exhibit strong ecological connectedness, indicating that cultural revitalization and traditional governance positively influence environmental engagement. Similarly, Menzies et al. (2024) emphasize that Indigenous values—such as responsibility, respect, and reciprocity toward nature—can serve as guiding principles for more equitable and effective environmental conservation. Brondízio et al. (2021) support this view by highlighting the significance of Indigenous and local knowledge systems in addressing socio-environmental challenges through conservation and environmental governance. While these cultural systems foster ecocentric worldviews, Sockhill et al. (2022) assert that individuals with anthropocentric values may also demonstrate strong pro-environmental behaviors, suggesting that cultural diversity does not preclude ecological concern.

However, Titaley and Watloly (2021) caution that both internal and external forces increasingly threaten Indigenous cultural values, though communities often express a desire to restore and preserve their traditions. Higgins (2022) further explains that climate change significantly impacts intangible Indigenous heritage by disrupting traditional environments and forcing cultural adaptations, thereby endangering long-standing ecological relationships.

Summary of Regression Analysis

This subsection explored the significant difference on cultural attitude and nature relatedness in terms of sex, educational attainment, and age.

Table 2 Relationship Between Key Variables in Terms of the Demographic Factors

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.939	.286		3.282	.002
	level of cultural attitude	.177	.128	.186	1.379	.177
	Sex	-.284	.115	-.337	-2.471	.019
	Educational Attainment	.054	.143	.060	.380	.706
	Age	.432	.128	.531	3.378	.002

If $p < 0.05$, reject the null hypothesis, while if $p \geq 0.05$, accept.

Table 2 shows the regression model analyzes, the predictive relationship between cultural attitude, sex, educational achievement, and age concerning nature relatedness. The constant (B

= 0.939, $p = 0.002$) is statistically significant, signifying a baseline level of nature relatedness when all predictors are set to zero. Among the predictors, age ($\beta = 0.432$, $p = 0.002$) exhibits the most robust and statistically significant positive influence on nature relatedness, indicating that older persons are more inclined to experience a connection to nature. Similarly, sex ($\beta = -0.284$, $p = 0.019$) serves as a significant predictor, suggesting that females generally report greater degrees of nature relatedness than males, as evidenced by the negative coefficient.

Conversely, the cultural attitude ($\beta = 0.177$, $p = 0.177$) and educational attainment ($\beta = 0.054$, $p = 0.706$) levels are not statistically significant, indicating they lack a substantial predictive impact on nature relatedness in this model. This corresponds with earlier research indicating that although cultural values may be conceptually linked to environmental behaviors, they may not directly affect an individual's personal connection to nature, particularly when other demographic factors such as age and gender exert more significant influence. The results indicate that age and gender exert greater influence than cultural or educational factors on nature-relatedness within this specific Indigenous community.

The influence of age and gender on nature relatedness is well supported by existing literature. De Sousa Sá et al. (2024) found that older adults tend to have a stronger connection to nature, which contributes positively to their well-being and overall quality of life. This aligns with Lee and Burns (2022), who attribute older adults' preference for natural environments to early-life exposure to nature, particularly through intergenerational experiences.

Regarding gender, multiple studies confirm that women generally exhibit higher levels of nature relatedness than men. Grabowska-Chenczke et al. (2022) reported that females demonstrate greater psychological well-being associated with their connection to nature, while Davidov et al. (2023) supported this finding with physiological evidence, showing that females score higher on the Environmental Identity Index and exhibit stronger neurological responses to natural stimuli.

On the other hand, educational attainment appears to have limited predictive power in determining one's nature relatedness. Agatha et al. (2024) found no significant relationship between education level and environmental behavior among university students, while Barragan-Jason et al. (2021) confirmed through meta-analysis that human-nature connectedness is not necessarily driven by educational background. These studies reinforce the present findings, which show that age and gender significantly influence nature relatedness, whereas cultural attitude and education do not exert substantial predictive effects within the studied Indigenous community.

Summary of Correlational Analysis

This subsection explored the significant relationship between the respondents' cultural attitude and nature relatedness

Table 3: Relationship Between Variables

Key Variables	Pearson r	R^2	Correlation	Probability Value	Significance
Cultural Attitude	0.12	0.01	Very low	0.452	Not
Nature Relatedness			positive		Significant

$p > 0.05 = \text{Accept } H_0 = \text{not significant}; p < 0.05 = \text{reject } H_0 = \text{significant}$

Table 3 indicates very low positive association between cultural attitude and natural relatedness among Indigenous People Polillo, Quezon, as evidenced by a Pearson r value of 0.12. This is a marginal upward tendency, implying that those with more favorable cultural attitudes may also exhibit greater nature relatedness; nonetheless, the correlation is exceedingly weak. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.01$) suggests that merely 1% of the variance in nature relatedness is attributable to cultural attitude, suggesting that cultural attitude possesses negligible predictive value regarding individuals' feelings of connection to nature.

Furthermore, the p -value of 0.452 considerably exceeds the widely recognized threshold of 0.05, signifying that the observed association lacks statistical significance. This indicates that the correlation may result from random fluctuations in the data rather than a genuine association within the population. Although theoretical assumptions suggest that cultural values, particularly in Indigenous societies, are closely linked to the natural world, the findings of this study do not indicate a statistically significant relationship between cultural attitudes and nature relatedness in this particular setting.

Various reasons may elucidate this outcome. Cultural identity may be diminishing or becoming increasingly fractured due to external factors such as modernization, migration, or restricted cultural transmission across generations. Although individuals may preserve specific cultural values, these do not inherently foster a robust ecological awareness or sense of environmental responsibility. The nature-relatedness of respondents may be affected by characteristics such as education, exposure to environmental initiatives, economic pressures, or religious beliefs that were not addressed in this study.

Association between cultural attitude and nature relatedness observed in this study is consistent with emerging literature that highlights the complexity and evolving nature of cultural identity in a globalized world. Nedashkivska et al. (2024) and Canaza-Choque (2022) emphasize that globalization, migration, and digital media are transforming traditional cultural identities, often leading to fragmented or hybrid forms that may dilute the coherence of cultural values, including those linked to environmental worldviews. Kerubo (2024) also notes that the homogenizing effects of globalization can erode localized cultural practices, weakening the assumed link between Indigenous cultural attitudes and ecological connection.

Furthermore, while cultural frameworks may conceptually support pro-environmental behavior, Mavisakalyan et al. (2023) found that individualistic cultural values can lead to greater environmental action but are not necessarily tied to deeper emotional or subjective well-being derived from nature. This supports the idea that behavior and emotional nature-relatedness may not always align. Toigo et al. (2022) further argue that personal and contextual factors, rather than broad cultural or transcendental values, more directly shape ecological behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the correlation between cultural views and nature relatedness among Indigenous People in Polillo, Quezon. The findings affirmed a robust cultural identity and profound ecological awareness throughout

the community; yet, statistical analysis indicated that cultural attitude did not significantly predict nature relatedness, with age and gender proving to be more influential determinants. The results indicate that while cultural values are conceptually linked to environmental behavior, they may not immediately correlate with a quantifiable sense of nature connectedness. The study's limitations stem from its dependence on negatively phrased items and its concentration on a particular Indigenous population, potentially impacting the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the results corroborate the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), highlighting the significance of intrinsic motivation and cultural identity in behavior, and validate the Biophilia Hypothesis (Wilson, 1984), which asserts an innate human propensity to engage with nature—an inclination that persists among the respondents regardless of demographic and cultural differences.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Facilitate intergenerational learning by urging elders to impart traditional ecological knowledge to future generations, so enhancing their connection to nature.
2. Implement gender-sensitive strategies, as gender affects natural connectivity, and customize programs to promote and enrich gender-specific interactions with nature.
3. Incorporate culture into environmental education by strengthening cultural identity through nature-based learning grounded in Indigenous traditions and values.
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5. Incorporate culture into environmental education by enhancing cultural identity through nature-based learning grounded in Indigenous traditions and values.
6. Formulate Culturally-Informed Policies with Local Government Units (LGUs) to facilitate the preservation of cultural and environmental heritage by enacting measures that safeguard Indigenous traditions and foster ecological consciousness in educational institutions and communities.

Authors' Contributions

Author 4 provided overall supervision of the study as the research adviser, while Authors 1, 2, and 3 were primarily responsible for writing the original draft, revising the manuscript, collecting data, and securing funding for the research. All remaining tasks—including conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data analysis, and interpretation of results—were collaboratively undertaken by all authors. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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