

Cultural Preservation Activities among the Mandaya People as Predicted by Political Autonomy and Intergenerational Transmission

Angel Joy O. Capiña
capinaangeljoy@gmail.com
Social Studies Teacher
Colegio de San Ignacio, Inc., Davao City, Philippines

Abstract

Poor cultural preservation activities remain a major global concern. Cultural preservation activities, as predicted by political autonomy and intergenerational transmission, were verified. A predictive research design and a survey approach were used. Data from 220 Mandaya respondents were selected through a simple random sampling technique. Using multiple linear regression analysis, the results revealed that the model has moderate predictive strength (37.8%) for cultural preservation activities. This result partly affirmed the Cultural Transmission Model. Future studies may explore other variables to account for the remaining (62.2%) of the criterion's variance. NCIP leaders may implement programs that strengthen indigenous governance and cultural transmission within the Mandaya Tribe.

Keywords: *Cultural preservation activities; Mandaya people; political autonomy; intergenerational transmission*

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Its Scope

Poor cultural preservation activities among the indigenous community remained a global concern. This includes forced assimilation, language loss, ritual decline, and weakening social structures that hinder their cultural continuity in the era of rapid globalization and political centralization (Alam, 2025). As a result, indigenous peoples worldwide experienced cultural stress, migration, and the homogenization of global practices, which were amplified by modernization, thereby restricting their ability to preserve their ancestral traditions (Nwobodo, 2020).

In Australia, Aboriginal communities experienced poor cultural preservation activities as younger generations, influenced by urbanization and digital media, become increasingly disconnected from traditional cultural practices, language, and Indigenous identity (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021; Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2024). Meanwhile, the Guna people in Panama experienced limited cultural preservation efforts, as tourism and wage-based livelihoods have led communities to shift away from traditional subsistence rituals, resulting in cultural stress and weakened cultural integrity (Dam Lam et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the Kamoro Indigenous people in West Papua experienced poor cultural preservation activities as rapid tourism growth and modernization

increasingly threaten their cultural identity and traditional way of life. These alarming international cases revealed the global struggle of indigenous communities to sustain their cultural traditions (Anindhita et al., 2024).

In the Philippines, Bonifacio et al. reported that many indigenous communities across the country were experiencing declining cultural preservation practices, particularly in the transmission of language, traditions, and ethnolinguistic identity. In Luzon, the Kankanaey people in the Cordillera region face limited cultural preservation efforts as they continue to struggle to sustain their cultural identity and autonomy, despite the legal recognition provided by the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Republic of the Philippines, 1997). Likewise, Mandaya traditions were at risk of decline because most farmers in Davao de Oro were older adults, while the younger generation showed little interest in traditional livelihood practices, reflecting a broader weakening of cultural preservation activities in traditional agriculture (Esteban et al., 2022). These findings suggested that cultural identity erosion among the Mandaya was influenced by limited community participation, urban migration, and a lack of mechanisms to sustain intergenerational learning.

Local studies and cultural documentation highlighted Mandaya cultural expressions, such as *Dagmay* weaving and oral traditions, including love songs, as important markers of identity that faced challenges in cultural continuity due to modernization and social change (Monteza et al., 2024; National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2021). However, these studies often employ a descriptive or ethnographic approach and do not further investigate how local government structures and the transmission of cultural knowledge influence the cultural continuity of the Mandaya people in the face of globalization and modernization. The limited empirical data on how political empowerment and cultural transmission translate into cultural continuity create a significant gap in the study. Addressing this gap and the research's relevance to the indigenous community underscored the urgency of conducting the study.

Significance of the Study

This research contributes to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), by fostering intergenerational knowledge transmission. The findings of the study serve as a basis for policymakers, cultural advocates, the Local Government Unit of Caraga Davao Oriental, and educational institutions in designing appropriate interventions and formulating culturally sensitive policies that strengthen both self-governance and the transmission of heritage within the Mandaya indigenous community. Significantly, the Mandaya community itself benefits from the recognition and documentation of its cultural practices, which may help preserve its identity and traditions for future generations. Aligned with the Mission-Vision-Goal of Holy Cross of Davao College, the findings reinforce the institution's commitment to a humane and faith-grounded society by amplifying the voices of marginalized cultural communities and fostering socially engaged, value-driven individuals.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the significance of political and intergenerational transmission variables as predictors of cultural preservation activities among the Mandaya people. Specifically, it pursued the following objectives:

1. To determine the levels of political autonomy in terms of self-governance, decision-making participation, and recognition of indigenous rights; intergenerational transmission in terms of language use, practice of rituals, and knowledge-sharing within families; and cultural preservation activities in terms of participation in traditional practices, preservation of artifacts, and community celebrations.
2. To determine the significance of the correlation between political autonomy and intergenerational transmission, and the cultural preservation activities among the Mandaya people; and
3. To determine the significance of the strength of the model for cultural preservation activities using political autonomy and intergenerational transmission as predictors.

Hypotheses

The study was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Political autonomy and intergenerational transmission do not significantly correlate with cultural preservation activities.

H₀₂: The strength of the model to predict cultural preservation activities, using political autonomy and intergenerational transmission as predictors, is not significant.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored on the Cultural Transmission Theory of Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) and Boyd and Richerson (1985), which explains how cultural knowledge, values, language, and practices are passed across generations through both formal and informal social systems. The theory emphasizes that cultural continuity is sustained through family, community institutions, and governance structures that support long-term preservation of cultural identity (Mesoudi, 2021).

In this study, political autonomy, as indicated by self-governance, decision-making, and recognition of indigenous rights (Ramirez Salazar et al., 2024; Farah, 2024; Sigurdarson, 2022), was linked to the theory's governance structures component. On the other hand, intergenerational transmission, as indicated by language use, ritual practice, and knowledge-sharing, aligns with the cultural knowledge and practice component of the theory, which is continuously passed within families and communities (Williams, 2024; Rubin et al., 2024; Menzies et al., 2024). Lastly, cultural preservation activities, as indicated by participation, artifact preservation, and community celebrations (Kumar & Niglio, 2025; Alam, 2025) and Candelario-Aplaon, Z. (2025), relate to the cultural continuity and preservation of the cultural identity component of the theory. Hence, the study is delimited to the elements of governance structures, cultural knowledge and practices, and cultural continuity highlighted in the Cultural Transmission Theory. The idea of values and language, highlighted in the theory, was excluded.

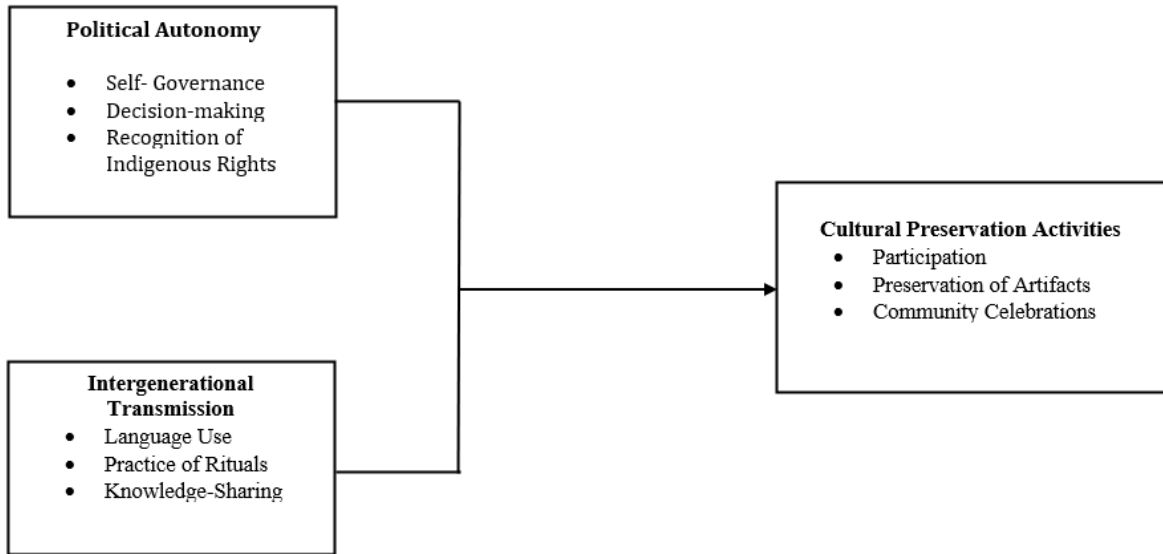


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODS

This section presented the research design, the study locale, the sample and sampling procedure, the data-gathering technique, the data analysis, and the ethical considerations.

Research Design

This research used a predictive research design. This design mainly involved collecting and analyzing data to identify patterns and relationships that could predict behaviors or outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This design was appropriate as it measured the levels of political autonomy and intergenerational transmission as predictors of cultural preservation activities among the Mandaya people in Caraga, Davao Oriental. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to examine relationships among variables using correlational and regression analyses. Through this approach, the researchers aimed to provide insights that may support cultural preservation initiatives, strengthen intergenerational cultural continuity, and guide local governments and indigenous organizations in advocating culturally responsive programs for the Mandaya community.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted among five (5) barangays with ancestral domains in the Municipality of Caraga, Davao Oriental, where Mandaya people predominantly reside. The selected barangays were Barangay Alvar, Palma Gil, Mercedes, Caningag, and Lamiawan. The Municipality of Caraga is recognized by the Local Government Unit and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) for its active cultural participation and transmission of heritage practices. This municipality provided an appropriate setting for the study, as it is home to various Mandaya people who continue to practice traditional cultural activities, making it an ideal setting for examining the influence of political autonomy and intergenerational transmission on cultural preservation. Furthermore, the study's locale enabled the researcher to gather

relevant data from respondents with direct knowledge and experience of Mandaya cultural practices and indigency.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study consisted of 220 Mandaya households residing in the Municipality of Caraga, Davao Oriental. There were 5 barangays randomly selected from the total 17 barangays in the municipality, and the respondents were proportionally allocated based on the number of households per barangay. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, the sample size of 220 households was determined. This formula is widely used in social science research to compute adequate sample sizes when the population is known and widely accepted method for determining representative sample sizes in survey research Adam (2021). The respondents were considered an appropriate unit of analysis based on the inclusion criteria, including ethnicity, residency in the barangay with ancestral domain, knowledge focused on political autonomy and intergenerational transmission, cultural involvement, and willingness to participate in the study.

In this study, the researcher employed a simple random sampling technique to select participants, ensuring that every qualified Mandaya household had an equal chance of being selected. This method is suitable for quantitative predictive studies conducted within clearly defined populations as it minimizes selection bias and strengthens the validity of statistical inferences (Creswell & Creswell, 2021; Etikan & Bala, 2023).

Data Gathering Technique

The survey technique was used to gather data by asking participants a set of structured questions via questionnaires. This technique allowed the researcher to efficiently collect data from a large number of respondents while maintaining standardization, ensuring that all participants answered the same questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2021; Thomas, 2023).

The variables in this study were measured using three adapted survey questionnaires. This questionnaire was adapted from the work of Ramírez Salazar et al. (2024), Farah (2024), and Sigurdarson (2022), which measured political autonomy through self-governance, participation in decision-making, and recognition of indigenous rights. This research utilized the adapted research questionnaire from Williams (2024), Rubin et al. (2024), and Menzies et al. (2024) to assess intergenerational transmission through language use, ritual practice, and knowledge sharing. Lastly, Kumar and Niglio (2025), Alam (2025), and Candelario-Aplaon, Z. (2025) measured cultural preservation activities through participation in traditional practices, preservation of artifacts, and community celebrations. All instruments were modified to align with the study's objectives and used a 4-point Likert scale from very low to very high.

The final research instrument contained 45 items: 15 for political autonomy, 15 items for intergenerational transmission, and 15 for cultural preservation activities. The research instrument was tested for reliability, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.774 for political autonomy, 0.841 for intergenerational transmission, and 0.781 for cultural preservation activities, indicating that the instruments were reliable for the study.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression. Descriptive data analysis is the process of organizing, summarizing, and presenting data in

a meaningful way using statistical measures such as mean and standard deviation to describe the main features of a dataset without making inferences beyond the collected data (Repedro & Diego, 2021). It is applied when researchers aim to provide a clear and straightforward understanding of respondents' characteristics, responses, or trends within a study, and facilitates interpretation through summary statistics and visual representation (Kotronoulas et al., 2023).

On the other hand, Correlation analysis is a statistical method used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between variables, commonly expressed through Pearson's r . It is appropriate for examining associations among study variables without implying causation, making it widely used in behavioral and social science research (Field, 2020; Pallant, 2020).

Finally, multiple linear regression analysis is a statistical method used to determine the extent to which the independent variables predict cultural preservation activities, using the Standardized Beta Coefficient. This method allows researchers to assess the relative influence of multiple predictors on an outcome variable, making it suitable for explanatory and predictive quantitative studies (Heinze et al., 2018; Dorta-González, 2023).

The matrix below presents the scale, descriptive level, and corresponding interpretation for each variable in this study. This measure is particularly used to describe levels of political autonomy, intergenerational transmission, and cultural preservation activities.

Scale	Level	Political Autonomy	Intergenerational Transmission	Cultural Preservation Activities
1.00 – 1.74	Very Low	Very poor	Very poor	Very Poor
1.75 – 2.49	Low	Poor	Poor	Poor
2.50 – 3.24	High	Good	Good	Good
3.25 - 4.00	Very High	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

The standard deviation value interpretations are as follows:

Range	Description	Interpretation
$SD \leq 0.50$	Highly Consistent Responses	Strong and uniform perception
$SD = 0.51 - 1.00$	Moderately Consistent Responses	Acceptable consistency
$SD = 1.01 - 1.50$	Low Consistency Responses	Differing views or experiences
$SD > 1.50$	Very Low Consistency Responses	High variability and lack of consensus

For the interpretation scale of r -value, the following scheme was used:

Computed r Value Range	Descriptive Interpretation
± 0.70 and above	Very High Correlation

Computed r Value Range	Descriptive Interpretation
$\pm 0.50 - \pm 0.69$	High Correlation
$\pm 0.30 - \pm 0.49$	Moderate Correlation
$\pm 0.10 - \pm 0.29$	Weak Correlation
$\pm 0.00 - \pm 0.09$	Very Weak Correlation

The study used a standard descriptive guide for interpreting Pearson's r-values, largely based on Guilford (1956). It adopted Cohen (1988) and Hair et al. (2019) for interpreting the strength of Beta (β) coefficients.

β Value Range	Predictive Strength
$\pm 0.00 - \pm 0.09$	Very Weak
$\pm 0.10 - \pm 0.29$	Weak
$\pm 0.30 - \pm 0.49$	Moderate
$\pm 0.50 - \pm 0.69$	Strong
± 0.70 and above	Very Strong

Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to the ethical protocols of the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) and obtained informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality from all respondents. The researcher secured permission from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the local government unit, and the tribal chieftain before gathering the data. Respondents' personal background will not be disclosed and will be used only for academic purposes. Adherence to ethical considerations safeguards the rights, dignity, and welfare of research participants, particularly in Indigenous research contexts (Israel & Hay, 2020; UN General Assembly, 2021). Moreover, the research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Society of Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) to ensure adherence to ethical, legal, and moral research principles. Lastly, the study's findings were shared with stakeholders, the academic community, and the Local Government Unit of Caraga for cultural research on the Mandaya tribe.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study. Specifically, it outlined descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses, along with their corresponding interpretations. It concludes with a summary of findings.

Descriptive Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistical results of the study. It includes the variables political autonomy, intergenerational transmission, and cultural preservation activities, along with their respective indicators. It also shows the number of respondents, the computed means and standard deviations, and their corresponding descriptive interpretations.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (n = 220)

Variables	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Political Autonomy	0.16	3.82	Very High
<i>Self-Governance</i>	0.24	3.84	Very High
<i>Decision-Making Participation</i>	0.25	3.72	Very High
<i>Recognition of Indigenous Rights</i>	0.19	3.90	Very High
Intergenerational Transmission	0.18	3.85	Very High
<i>Language Use</i>	0.20	3.89	Very High
<i>Practice of Rituals</i>	0.21	3.87	Very High
<i>Knowledge-Sharing within Families</i>	0.27	3.80	Very High
Cultural Preservation Activities	0.24	3.80	Very High
<i>Participation in Traditional Practices</i>	0.34	3.70	Very High
<i>Preservation of Artifacts</i>	0.27	3.84	Very High
<i>Community Celebrations</i>	0.22	3.87	Very High

1.00-1.74 Very Low, 1.75-2.49 Low, 2.50-3.24 High, 3.25-4.00 Very High

Specifically, Table 1 shows that the political autonomy variable had a mean score of 3.82, indicating very high autonomy. This indicates that the respondents perceived their political autonomy as very good. All indicators are also described as very high. The corresponding standard deviation of 0.16 is considered highly consistent, indicating strong, uniform perceptions among the respondents. On the other hand, the intergenerational transmission variable yielded a mean score of 3.85, which is described as high. This implies that the respondent perceived intergenerational transmission as very good. All its indicators are also described and obtained from a very high level. The standard deviation of 0.18 is considered highly consistent, indicating strong, uniform perceptions of cultural transmission across generations. Finally, the cultural preservation activities variable had a mean score of 3.80, indicating very high levels. This indicates that cultural preservation activities are very good. All indicators are likewise described as very high. The standard deviation of 0.24 indicates highly consistent responses, indicating strong, uniform perceptions among respondents.

Among the study's variables, intergenerational transmission had the highest mean score, indicating that the transfer of cultural language, knowledge, and practices across generations is the strongest factor among respondents. In comparison, political autonomy and cultural preservation activities were also rated very high, reflecting strong manifestations of indigenous governance and cultural engagement within the Mandaya community.

Correlations Results

Table 2 presents the correlation analysis. It contains the predictive and criterion variables. It also contains the r-value, p-value, decision on the null hypothesis, and its corresponding interpretation.

Table 2. Correlation Table (n = 220)

Variables	Cultural Preservation Activities			
	R	p	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Political Autonomy Intergenerational Transmission	0.409	0.000	Reject Ho	Positive, Moderate and Significant Relationship
	0.601	0.000	Reject Ho	Positive, Moderate and Significant Relationship

Level of Significance: 0.05

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

The table specifically shows that the correlation between political autonomy and cultural preservation variables obtained a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It indicates that the correlation between the two variables is statistically significant. The corresponding r-value of 0.409 indicates a positive and moderate relationship. This study implies that as political autonomy increases, cultural preservation activities tend to increase as well. However, the relationship is only moderate, which suggests that other factors may also influence cultural preservation activities. Likewise, the table shows a significant correlation between intergenerational transmission and cultural preservation activities (p-value = 0.000), which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It indicates that the correlation between intergenerational transmission increases and cultural preservation activities is statistically significant. The corresponding r-value of 0.601 indicates a positive and moderate correlation between the two variables. This study implies that stronger intergenerational transmission is associated with greater engagement in cultural preservation activities among the Mandaya people.

Both political autonomy and intergenerational transmission are strongly linked to cultural preservation activities, suggesting that strengthening these areas can positively impact cultural continuity. This connection can inspire confidence in community-led initiatives and research efforts.

Regression Results

Table 3 presents the regression table. It includes the determinants and the criterion variable. Likewise, it contains the estimate, the standardized estimate (β), the standard error, the t-test, the p-value, the decision on the null hypothesis, and its corresponding interpretation of the result.

Table 2. Regression Table (n = 220)

Predictors	Cultural Preservation Activities					Decision on Ho	Interpretation
	Estimate	Std. Estimate	SE	t	p		
Intercept	0.18		0.34	0.54	0.589		
Political Autonomy	0.22	0.15	0.09	2.39	0.018	Reject Ho	Significant Influence
Intergenerational Transmission	0.73	0.53	0.08	8.57	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant Influence

Model Summary: $R = 0.615$, $R^2 = 0.378$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.372$, $F = 65.9$, $p = 0.000$

Level of Significance: 0.05

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$

Predictive Model: $IS = 0.22 PA + 0.73 IT + 0.18$

Table 3 specifically shows that the model predicting cultural preservation activities using political autonomy and intergenerational transmission is $IS = 0.22 PA + 0.73 IT + 0.18$. The R^2 value of 0.378 indicates that the model has a moderate predictive strength in explaining cultural preservation activities, with political autonomy and intergenerational transmission serving as significant predictors. Furthermore, the corresponding p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the strength of the model is significant. Finally, this implies that for every unit change in any predictor in the model, there is a corresponding change in the predicted outcomes for cultural preservation activities.

The findings indicate that political autonomy and intergenerational transmission significantly predict cultural preservation activities, with changes in these factors corresponding to changes in the level of cultural preservation activities.

Summary of Findings

1. Political autonomy and intergenerational transmission significantly correlated with cultural preservation activities.
2. The strength of the model (0.378) significantly predicted cultural preservation activities, using political autonomy and intergenerational transmission as predictors.

DISCUSSIONS

The study's findings are discussed in this section. Likewise, the conclusion and recommendations are presented.

Political autonomy and intergenerational transmission correlate with cultural preservation activities.

This study finds that political autonomy and intergenerational transmission are significantly correlated with cultural preservation activities. The current findings affirm the study conducted by McCarty and Nicholas (2021), who emphasized that indigenous political autonomy has a significant positive relationship with cultural preservation activities, suggesting that autonomy and self-governance provide Indigenous groups with their own authority in implementing culturally grounded programs and policies, which is significant to the preservation of language, rituals, and customary practices. Likewise, the current finding supports UNESCO's (2022) report, which emphasizes that intergenerational transmission is positively associated with cultural preservation activities. The continuous transfer of indigenous languages, rituals, beliefs, and traditional knowledge from elders to younger generations strengthens the preservation and cultural continuity of heritage. However, the current finding contradicts the study conducted by Kral (2020), which reported that modernization and external social influences may weaken the relationship between political autonomy, intergenerational transmission, and cultural preservation activities, as younger generations become less engaged in indigenous traditions. Moreover, the present finding is based on a larger sample of 220 respondents, whereas Kral's study focused on selected indigenous communities with fewer participants and a narrower scope.

The model's predictive strength for cultural preservation activities is significant.

The findings of this study reveal that the model's ability to predict cultural preservation activities, using political autonomy and intergenerational transmission as predictors, is significant. This finding affirms

the study by Kelly et al. (2024), which asserts that political autonomy significantly predicts cultural preservation activities. It demonstrates that indigenous communities with greater participation in governance and the continuous transmission of indigenous knowledge across generations are better able to sustain their cultural identity, practices, and traditions. Similarly, this current finding confirms Williams's (2024) study, which found that both political autonomy and intergenerational transmission are strongly associated with cultural preservation activities, suggesting that these factors play an important role in maintaining cultural continuity and resilience among the indigenous community. However, this current finding differs from Novellino's (2024) study, which found that cultural preservation is influenced more by modernization, socio-economic pressures, and external governance systems than by political autonomy and intergenerational transmission alone. This only suggests that these variables may not always form a statistically significant model in explaining variations in cultural preservation activities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that political autonomy and intergenerational transmission are significantly correlated with cultural preservation activities among the Mandaya people. The moderate (37.8%) strength of the model in explaining the cultural preservation activities, with political autonomy and intergenerational transmission as predictors, is significant. These results partly support the Cultural Transmission Model, which posits that cultural knowledge, values, language, and practices are continuously transmitted across generations through participation and shared experiences, thereby preserving and sustaining indigenous culture and identity.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, future studies may explore additional variables to explain the remaining 62.2% of the variance in cultural preservation activities not accounted for in this study. This study may also be replicated in all the remaining barangays with existing ancestral domains, or it may include other Mandaya respondents from different municipalities in the province of Davao Oriental. Additionally, future researchers may use qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to explore further the factors, beliefs, lived experiences, and cultural practices of the Mandaya community. Furthermore, NCIP officials may conduct seminars, leadership training, and capacity-building programs for tribal leaders to strengthen engagement within the Mandaya community. These initiatives promote indigenous rights, self-governance, and participation in decision-making in line with the IPRA Law. School leaders may organize cultural immersion activities and educational tours to community museums, and support research on Mandaya culture to sustain and preserve its heritage across generations.

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Above all, this achievement stands as a testament to perseverance, faith, and the countless people who became part of this meaningful journey.

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