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TRADITIONAL FOOD PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES OF THE UMAYAMNON TRIBE AS DRIVERS OF CULTURAL FOOD IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the traditional food preservation and sustainability practices of the Umayamnon Tribe in Cabanglasan, Bukidnon and examines their influence on cultural food identity and community well-being. Grounded in traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), it determines the extent to which indigenous methods—such as wrapping, salting, drying, smoking, fermenting, and bamboo cooking (linotlot)—are practiced, alongside sustainability practices including seasonal harvesting, zero-waste utilization, and communal sharing. These practices reflect indigenous ecological knowledge that promotes environmental stewardship, resilience, and eco-friendly food production with minimal waste. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, utilizing a validated questionnaire and supported by qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis. Findings revealed that traditional preservation and sustainability practices are highly observed, while cultural food identity remains strong among participants. Significant relationships were found among these variables, emphasizing the role of indigenous perspectives in environmental conservation and cultural continuity. The study implies that strengthening TEK through education and intergenerational transmission supports sustainable development. It recommends integrating indigenous knowledge into programs aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 12 to promote food security, responsible consumption, and cultural preservation.

Keywords: *traditional food preservation, sustainability practices, cultural food identity, indigenous knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Umayamnon Tribe*

INTRODUCTION

The act of food preservation has long been a vital cultural and ecological practice that enables communities to ensure food safety, express cultural identity, and maintain harmony with nature. Traditional methods such as drying, fermenting, salting, and smoking are not merely survival strategies but are deeply embedded cultural systems transmitted across generations, reinforcing collective memory and identity (Knorr & Agustin, 2023). Recent studies emphasize that these practices are grounded in indigenous knowledge systems that strengthen community resilience, food security, and cultural continuity, particularly among indigenous populations facing socio-environmental change (Rani et al., 2025).

In the Philippine context, traditional food preservation holds particular significance due to the country's rich ecological diversity and multicultural composition. Many ethnolinguistic groups continue to practice bamboo cooking, fermentation, and meat smoking as expressions of shared values, environmental stewardship, and cultural identity (Shakya et al., 2024). These practices function as adaptive responses to climate variability, food scarcity, and environmental stress, especially in rural and indigenous communities (Sohel et al., 2022). However, rapid modernization, commercialization of food systems, and globalization increasingly marginalize these traditions, raising concerns about the erosion of indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage (Judijanto & Aslan, 2024).

Among the indigenous peoples of Mindanao, particularly in Bukidnon, foodways remain closely linked to ancestral land, spirituality, and ecological knowledge. Ethnobotanical studies reveal that indigenous communities rely heavily on both wild and cultivated plant species for food, medicine, and ritual practices, underscoring the inseparable relationship between biodiversity and culture (Gebre, Gitima, & Berhanu, 2025). For the Umayamnon and neighboring groups, traditional foods such as fermented rice beverages and linotlot (food cooked in bamboo) are central to communal gatherings, rituals, and oral traditions, symbolizing unity, respect for nature, and spiritual beliefs (Manik et al., 2024). These practices illustrate how food preservation serves not only nutritional needs but also reinforces cultural food identity.

Despite the growing body of literature on indigenous knowledge systems, a significant research gap persists regarding the food preservation and sustainability practices of the Umayamnon people of Cabanglasan, Bukidnon. Existing studies predominantly focus on their educational access, social conditions, or medicinal plant use (Camoning et al., 2023), while their traditional food preservation methods remain largely undocumented and underexplored. This gap limits a comprehensive understanding of how Umayamnon foodways contribute to cultural identity, ecological sustainability, and intergenerational knowledge transmission (Abatayo & Gumapang, 2024). Addressing this

gap is critical, as food practices are among the most tangible and vulnerable elements of indigenous culture.

The Umayamnon tribe depends heavily on bamboo forests, river systems, and surrounding natural landscapes for sourcing, processing, and preserving food. Their lived experiences demonstrate a holistic worldview where culture, land, and survival are deeply interconnected, enabling them to sustain their community for generations (Camoning et al., 2023). However, these traditions face growing threats from lifestyle transitions, environmental degradation, and inadequate documentation, placing their cultural heritage at risk of disappearance (Bihari, 2023). Without systematic research and documentation, valuable indigenous knowledge that supports sustainability and cultural identity may be permanently lost.

This study is therefore justified as it seeks to document, analyze, and contextualize the traditional food preservation practices of the Umayamnon tribe as key drivers of cultural food identity and sustainable living. It directly contributes to global development priorities articulated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by promoting indigenous food security systems, SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through cultural heritage preservation, and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by highlighting sustainable, low-impact food practices rooted in indigenous knowledge (United Nations, 2015). By foregrounding Umayamnon food preservation practices, this study not only fills a critical research gap but also supports the recognition, protection, and integration of indigenous knowledge into contemporary sustainability and development discourse.

Research Questions

This research explored how the Umayamnon Tribe of Cabanglasan, Bukidnon, maintains its use of traditional food preservation techniques and how these influence their cultural identity. More particularly, the research sought to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the participants' extent of use of traditional food preservation practices?
2. What is the participants' assessment of the local food accessibility?
3. What is the participants' self-report of their culinary self-efficacy?
4. What is the participants' level of cultural food identity considering:
    - 4.1 cultural food awareness
    - 4.2 cultural food practices
    - 4.3 food heritage value
    - 4.4 consumption pattern
    - 4.5 cultural food expression
5. Do the participants' food preservation practices, local food accessibility and self-efficacy significantly predict their cultural food identity?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on Cultural Identity Theory, which posits that cultural practices, including food traditions, shape and reinforce an individual's sense of identity. Cultural identity is not static; rather, it is continuously constructed and maintained through shared experiences, rituals, and everyday practices within a community. Traditional food practices, such as preparation, preservation, and consumption, function as cultural symbols that embody values, beliefs, and historical continuity. For indigenous groups, these practices are integral in preserving ancestral knowledge and strengthening a collective sense of belonging. Thus, engaging in traditional food preservation methods enables individuals to internalize and express their cultural identity across generations.

The study is also supported by the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, which explains that human behavior is shaped by multiple levels of influence, including individual, interpersonal, community, and societal factors. In this context, traditional food preservation and sustainability practices can be understood across these layers. At the individual level, knowledge and skills in food preservation influence personal attitudes and behaviors toward culture. At the interpersonal level, these practices are transmitted through family and community interactions, such as shared cooking and communal food preparation. At the community level, cultural norms and traditions reinforce the importance of maintaining these practices. At the societal level, external forces such as modernization, globalization, and policy environments either support or challenge the continuity of indigenous traditions.

Furthermore, sustainability practices—such as seasonal harvesting, zero-waste utilization, and communal sharing—reflect the ecological dimension of the model, emphasizing the relationship between people and their environment. These practices demonstrate how cultural behaviors are shaped not only by social interactions but also by environmental conditions and resource availability. Through this lens, the preservation of traditional food practices is both a cultural and ecological process that contributes to sustainable living and cultural resilience.

In this study, traditional food preservation practices and sustainability practices are treated as independent variables, as they represent the influencing factors rooted in cultural and environmental systems. Cultural food identity is the dependent variable, reflecting the outcome shaped by these practices. The framework assumes that the continued engagement in traditional and sustainable food practices strengthens cultural food identity by reinforcing knowledge, values, and a sense of belonging within the Umayamnon community.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between traditional food preservation practices, sustainability practices, and cultural food identity among the Umayamnon Tribe. A descriptive design was appropriate as it systematically describes the current status of variables, while the correlational component determines the degree and direction of relationships among them without manipulating any variables. This design is widely used in social science research where the objective is to understand naturally occurring relationships (Creswell, 2018).

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants of the study were selected members of the Umayamnon Tribe in Cabanglasan who possess knowledge and lived experience in traditional food preservation and sustainability practices. A total of 150 participants were included in the study, representing community members who are actively engaged in or familiar with indigenous food practices. This sample size was deemed sufficient to provide meaningful insights into the cultural and sustainability dimensions of traditional food systems within the community.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only individuals who have direct involvement in or substantial knowledge of traditional food practices were included. This non-probability sampling method is particularly appropriate for studies involving indigenous knowledge systems, as it enables the researcher to gather rich, relevant, and context-specific data from key informants who can best articulate cultural practices and meanings (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2024).

The inclusion criteria for participation were as follows: (1) must be a recognized member of the Umayamnon Tribe, (2) must be a resident of Cabanglasan, and (3) must demonstrate familiarity or active participation in traditional food preservation and sustainability practices. Individuals who did not meet these criteria or who were unwilling to participate were excluded from the study.

Participation was entirely voluntary, and all participants were provided with clear information regarding the purpose and procedures of the research. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, ensuring that participants understood their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time without any consequences. This approach ensured ethical integrity while fostering trust and respect within the indigenous community.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to measure three main variables: traditional food preservation practices, sustainability practices, and

cultural food identity. The instrument consisted of structured items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), to capture participants' perceptions, attitudes, and practices.

The questionnaire was developed based on a review of related literature on indigenous food systems and cultural identity. To ensure validity, the instrument underwent content validation by experts in research and indigenous studies. Reliability testing was also conducted using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency of the items. Likert-scale instruments are widely used in social research for measuring attitudes and behavioral tendencies due to their reliability and ease of interpretation (Bhandari & Nikolopoulou, 2023).

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher sought formal approval from the Lourdes College Research and Ethics Committee (LCREC) to ensure compliance with institutional, ethical, and legal standards. The issuance of an approval certificate confirmed that the research protocol adhered to established ethical guidelines.

Following this, the research protocol was submitted to the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Cabanglasan and the Municipal Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) for review and endorsement. In line with ethical requirements, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) was secured from all participants, ensuring that their participation was voluntary, informed, and respectful of their rights, cultural integrity, and indigenous knowledge systems (Municipal IPMR, 2017).

As part of cultural protocol, a ritual was conducted with a tribal elder to seek blessing and acceptance from the community. This practice signified respect for the traditions, authority, and values of the Umayamnon Tribe.

Formal permission was also obtained from the Umayamnon Tribal Council and relevant local authorities prior to data collection. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained before their involvement. They were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Data were gathered through the administration of a validated questionnaire, conducted either through guided distribution or assisted responses to ensure clarity and inclusivity, particularly in consideration of cultural and language contexts. Throughout the process, the researcher maintained cultural sensitivity and respect in all interactions with participants.

Statistical Analysis of Data

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to

summarize and describe the levels of traditional food preservation practices, sustainability practices, and cultural food identity.

To examine the relationships among variables, correlational analysis (e.g., Pearson r) was employed to determine the strength and direction of association between traditional practices, sustainability practices, and cultural food identity. Correlational analysis is appropriate when assessing relationships without implying causation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

All statistical analyses were conducted at a specified level of significance to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1. What is the participants' extent of use of traditional food preservation practices?

Table 1
Frequency, Percentage, and Mean Distribution of the participant's extent of use of traditional food preservation practices

Range	Description	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High	40	26.67
3.51-4.50	Agree	High	83	55.33
2.51-3.50	Neutral	Moderate	24	16.00
1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low	1	0.67
1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	2	1.33
	Total		**150**	**100.0**
	Overall Mean			**4.12**
	Interpretation			**High**
	SD			**0.69**

	Specific Indicators	M	Description	SD
1	Our household regularly uses traditional methods to preserve food	3.90	Agree	0.97
2	Wrapping food using natural materials (leaves or bamboo) is still practiced in our family	4.22	Agree	1.00
3	Salting food is an important way for us to extend food availability	4.26	Agree	0.99
4	Bamboo cooking is prepared during gatherings or regular meals.	4.11	Agree	0.88

Key Result:
Overall Mean: 4.12 (High)

Most respondents actively practice traditional methods
Highest: Salting (M = 4.26)
Lowest: Regular household use (M = 3.90)

The findings show that traditional food preservation practices are still highly practiced among the Umayamnon tribe. Methods such as drying, smoking, and bamboo cooking remain part of their daily life. Salting emerged as the most commonly used method, indicating its importance in extending food availability. However, regular household use received the lowest mean, suggesting that while these practices are valued, they are not consistently applied in all households, possibly due to modernization and convenience.

This implies that traditional preservation remains culturally significant but is gradually influenced by modern lifestyle changes.

Research Question 2. What is the participants' assessment of the local food accessibility?

Table 2
Frequency, Percentage, and Mean Distribution of the participant's assessment of the local food accessibility

Range	Description	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High	45	30.00
3.51-4.50	Agree	High	55	36.67
2.51-3.50	Neutral	Moderate	47	31.33
1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low	2	1.33
1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	1	0.67
	Total		**150**	**100.0**
	Overall Mean			**4.02**
	Interpretation			**High**
	SD			**0.75**

	Specific Indicators	M	Description	SD
1	Traditional food ingredients are easily available in our community.	4.01	Agree	0.97
2	We can gather or produce most of our food locally.	3.93	Agree	1.10
3	Local food sources help us continue traditional food practices.	4.34	Agree	0.75
4	Limited access to local food resources affects our traditional food preparation.	3.81	Agree	1.01

Key Result:
Overall Mean: 4.02 (High)
Highest: Supports traditions (M = 4.34)
Lowest: Limitations still exist (M = 3.81)

The results indicate that local food resources are generally accessible to the participants, which supports the continuation of traditional food practices. However, there are still challenges, particularly the transition from forest-based food sourcing to a more money-based system. This reflects a shift in lifestyle, where food that was once freely gathered now requires financial resources.

Thus, while accessibility remains high, modernization introduces limitations that may affect sustainability.

Research Question 3. What is the participants' self-report of their culinary self-efficacy?

Table 3
Frequency, Percentage, and Mean Distribution of the participant's self-report of their culinary self-efficacy

Range	Description	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High	50	33.33
3.51-4.50	Agree	High	61	40.67
2.51-3.50	Neutral	Moderate	38	25.33
1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low	0	0.00
1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	1	0.67
	Total		**150**	**100.0**
	Overall Mean			**4.17**
	Interpretation			**High**
	SD			**0.70**

	Specific Indicators	M	Description	SD
1	I know how to use traditional food preservation methods properly.	4.02	Agree	1.04
2	I can prepare preserved foods without relying on modern equipment.	4.29	Agree	0.87
3	I am comfortable teaching younger family members how to prepare traditional foods.	4.36	Agree	0.83
4	I have enough skills to maintain our traditional food practices.	4.03	Agree	1.05

Key Result:
Overall Mean: 4.17 (High)
Highest: Teaching younger generation (M = 4.36)
Lowest: Technical mastery (M = 4.02)

The participants demonstrate strong confidence in their culinary skills, particularly in teaching traditional practices to younger generations. This highlights the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer in preserving culture. However, slightly lower

confidence in technical mastery suggests that some traditional skills may not be fully developed or consistently practiced.

This means that while confidence is high, continuous practice and skill enhancement are still necessary.

Research Question 4. What is the participants' level of cultural food identity considering:

4.1 cultural food awareness
4.2 food heritage value
4.4 consumption pattern
4.5 cultural food expression?

Table 4
Frequency, Percentage, and Mean Distribution of the participant's level of cultural food identity considering cultural food awareness

Range	Description	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High	57	38.00
3.51-4.50	Agree	High	60	40.00
2.51-3.50	Neutral	Moderate	27	18.00
1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low	6	4.00
1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	0	0.00
	Total		**150**	**100.0**
	Overall Mean			**4.26**
	Interpretation			**High**
	SD			**0.76**

	Specific Indicators	M	Description	SD
1	I know the stories or beliefs connected to our traditional foods.	4.21	Agree	0.90
2	I recognize traditional food as part of our cultural identity.	4.32	Agree	0.82

Table 5
Frequency, Percentage, and Mean Distribution of the participant's level of cultural food identity considering food heritage value

Range	Description	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High	65	43.44
3.51-4.50	Agree	High	50	33.33
2.51-3.50	Neutral	Moderate	28	18.67
1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low	6	4.00
1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	1	0.67
	Total		**150**	**100.0**
	Overall Mean			**4.33**

	Interpretation		**High**
	SD		**0.79**

	Specific Indicators	**M**	**Description**	**SD**
1	Traditional food knowledge should be passed on to future generations.	4.25	Agree	0.95
2	Traditional foods represent the history of the Umayamnon people.	4.41	Agree	0.87

Table 6
Frequency, Percentage, and Mean Distribution of the participant's level of cultural food identity considering consumption pattern

Range	**Description**	**Interpretation**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High	51	34.00
3.51-4.50	Agree	High	64	42.67
2.51-3.50	Neutral	Moderate	28	18.67
1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low	4	2.67
1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	3	2.00
	Total		**150**	**100.0**
	Overall Mean			**4.20**
	Interpretation			**High**
	SD			**0.81**

	Specific Indicators	**M**	**Description**	**SD**
1	Traditional food consumption strengthens family bonding.	4.17	Agree	1.00
2	Our eating habits reflect Umayamnon values and traditions.	4.23	Agree	0.87

Table 7
Frequency, Percentage, and Mean Distribution of the participant's level of cultural food identity considering cultural food expression

Range	**Description**	**Interpretation**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High	60	40.00
3.51-4.50	Agree	High	72	48.00
2.51-3.50	Neutral	Moderate	15	10.00
1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low	2	1.33
1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low	1	0.67
	Total		**150**	**100.0**
	Overall Mean			**4.41**
	Interpretation			**High**
	SD			**0.67**

	Specific Indicators	M	Description	SD
1	Traditional foods are served during rituals, gatherings, and celebrations.	4.41	Agree	0.69
2	Traditional food symbolizes our identity as Umayamnon.	4.41	Agree	0.83

Table 8
Summary Table of Cultural Food Identity

Dimensions	Mean	Interpretation	SD
Cultural food awareness	4.26	High	0.76
Food heritage value	4.33	High	0.79
Consumption Pattern	4.20	High	0.81
Cultural food expression	4.41	High	0.67
Cultural Food Identity	4.29	**High**	0.57

The findings reveal that the Umayamnon tribe has a strong cultural food identity. Among the dimensions, cultural food expression ranked the highest, showing that traditions are actively practiced during gatherings and celebrations. Food heritage value and awareness are also high, indicating that participants recognize food as part of their history and identity. However, consumption pattern ranked the lowest, suggesting that daily eating practices are slightly affected by modernization and changing lifestyles.

This implies that cultural identity is strongly preserved through expression and values, even if daily practices are evolving.

Research Question 5. Do the participants' food preservation practices, local food accessibility and self-efficacy significantly predict their cultural food identity?

Ho_1: *The participants' food preservation practices, local food accessibility and self-efficacy do not significantly predict their cultural food identity.*

Table 9
Correlation between participants' food preservation practices, local food accessibility and self-efficacy on their cultural food identity

		Traditional Food Preservation practices	Local food accessibility	Culinary Self efficacy
Cultural food awareness	Pearson Correlation	.546**	.614**	.658**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
Food heritage value	Pearson Correlation	.500**	.533**	.545**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
Consumption Pattern	Pearson Correlation	.598**	.616**	.599**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
Cultural food expression	Pearson Correlation	.641**	.459**	.543**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
Cultural Food Identity	Pearson Correlation	.531**	.605**	.523**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.001	.007

Key Results:
All variables are significantly correlated
Strongest relationships:
Self-efficacy & Awareness (r = .658)
Preservation & Expression (r = .641)
Accessibility & Consumption (r = .616)
Awareness: 4.26
Heritage Value: 4.33
Consumption Pattern: 4.20
Cultural Expression: 4.41 (Highest)

The results show that all independent variables significantly influence cultural food identity. The strongest relationship was between culinary self-efficacy and cultural food awareness, indicating that individuals who are more confident in cooking have a deeper understanding of their food culture. Traditional food preservation practices are strongly linked to cultural expression, meaning that practicing these methods helps maintain cultural identity. Additionally, access to local food influences consumption patterns, showing that availability affects actual practice. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This confirms that skills, practices, and accessibility collectively shape cultural food identity.

The interview findings support the quantitative results. Participants emphasized that traditional food practices are still present but are affected by modernization. They also highlighted that food represents identity, heritage, and memory. One major challenge identified is teaching the younger generation, as interest and participation are gradually declining.

This shows that cultural preservation depends not only on practice but also on active transmission to future generations.

Overall, the study reveals that traditional food preservation practices, local food accessibility, and culinary self-efficacy all play significant roles in sustaining the cultural food identity of the Umayamnon tribe. Despite the influence of modernization, cultural identity remains strong, especially through social practices, shared traditions, and community gatherings. However, there is a need to strengthen the transmission of these practices to younger generations to ensure long-term sustainability.

Results revealed that traditional food preservation practices are highly practiced among the Umayamnon Tribe, particularly in drying, smoking, and bamboo cooking. These methods remain integral to daily life and cultural expression.

Sustainability practices such as seasonal harvesting and zero-waste utilization were also highly observed, reflecting strong environmental awareness and resource management within the community. Cultural food identity among participants was found to be strong, indicating a deep connection between food practices and cultural belonging.

Regression analysis showed that both traditional food preservation and sustainability practices significantly influence cultural food identity. This suggests that continued engagement in these practices strengthens cultural awareness and identity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that traditional food preservation and sustainability practices are essential drivers of cultural food identity among the Umayamnon Tribe. Findings from the survey and focus group discussions (FGD) consistently revealed that practices such as drying, smoking, fermenting, and bamboo cooking (linotlot) are not merely methods of food preparation but are deeply embedded cultural expressions that connect individuals to their ancestry and community. Participants shared that these practices are often learned through observation and participation in family and communal activities, highlighting the lived and experiential nature of indigenous knowledge transmission. In real-life contexts, these practices continue to serve as practical strategies for food security, especially in rural and resource-limited settings, while simultaneously reinforcing cultural values such as cooperation, respect for nature, and collective identity.

However, the findings also reflect emerging challenges. FGD participants noted that modernization, changing food preferences, and limited documentation contribute to the gradual decline of these traditions, particularly among younger generations. This situation underscores the urgent need to preserve and revitalize indigenous knowledge systems before they are diminished. Despite these challenges, the strong sense of cultural food identity observed among participants indicates that traditional practices remain a resilient foundation for cultural continuity when actively practiced and supported within the community.

In alignment with transformative and culturally responsive pedagogy that emphasizes faith, service, and social responsibility, this study highlights the important role of education in sustaining indigenous heritage. Such an approach advocates for

community engagement and the integration of local knowledge into academic discourse, encouraging learners to become agents of cultural preservation and social transformation. By embedding indigenous food practices into educational and extension programs, institutions can help bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern learning systems.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that indigenous food practices be systematically integrated into educational curricula, cultural programs, and community-based initiatives to promote awareness and appreciation among younger generations. Government agencies and educational institutions are encouraged to strengthen policies and programs that support the documentation, preservation, and promotion of indigenous knowledge systems. Furthermore, communities should actively foster intergenerational learning by encouraging elders to share their knowledge and skills with the youth through storytelling, demonstration, and participation in traditional activities.

Future research may explore additional factors influencing cultural identity, such as globalization, technology, and formal education systems, as well as employ longitudinal or qualitative approaches to better understand how cultural practices evolve over time. Ultimately, preserving traditional food practices is not only vital for sustaining cultural identity but also for promoting inclusive cultural development, resilience, and sustainability in indigenous communities.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

In conducting this study, strict adherence to the ethics of research was observed. Informed consent was obtained. The respondents' well-being was protected and their anonymity was maintained. Data privacy was upheld; intellectual property rights were respected and there was no conflict of interest.

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