

PRESERVING INDIGENOUS CULTURE (AETA) IN TARLAC; A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL ASPECT

ABSTRACT

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The Aeta, among the Philippines' earliest indigenous groups, possess a vibrant cultural heritage characterized by traditional skills in hunting, gathering, farming, and handicraft-making. These practices are integral to their identity and community life. However, the forces of modernization, land displacement, and continued marginalization pose serious threats to the survival of these cultural traditions. This research seeks to identify sustainable strategies for preserving and revitalizing Aeta heritage while also examining the barriers that hinder the intergenerational transmission of their traditional knowledge and practices. A mixed-methods research design was adopted to provide a well-rounded analysis of the issue, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative component involved structured surveys, while the qualitative aspect consisted of in-depth interviews to gather detailed insights. A total of 35 participants from the Aeta community in Sitio Gayaman, Tarlac City, were purposively selected for their direct experience and cultural knowledge relevant to the study's objectives. This study examines the traditional knowledge and cultural practices of the Aeta community in Tarlac, focusing on hunting, gathering, farming methods, and handicraft-making, as well as the challenges affecting their preservation. Demographic data indicate that most participants are between 36 and 45 years old (34%), with 75% identifying as female. Regarding educational attainment, 63% have completed at least some level of junior or senior high school. Findings show that traditional knowledge in hunting and gathering remains actively practiced, with high mean scores for plant collection techniques used for food and medicine (3.51), and hunting skills (3.34). Despite this, the Aeta community faces significant threats to cultural continuity, including urban migration (noted by 35 respondents), the loss of ancestral lands, and insufficient government policies supporting indigenous heritage. The findings of the study highlight the Aeta community's strong proficiency in traditional practices. Notably, their ability to determine the appropriate time and location for hunting received a weighted mean of 3.34, while their use of traditional methods for gathering plants used for food and medicine ranked highest with a weighted mean of 3.51. These results underscore the community's deep-rooted knowledge of sustainable resource use and commitment to preserving ancestral wisdom. However, lower-ranked responses reveal critical challenges, particularly the increasing migration to urban areas, which disrupts traditional lifestyles and hampers the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

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