

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2025, Vol. 6, No. 1, 257 – 271

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.06.01.18>

Research Article

Political and Leadership Practices of The Domaget Indigenous People in Nueva Ecija

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Article history:

Submission 31 December 2024

Revised 07 January 2025

Accepted 23 January 2025

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous Peoples (IPs) play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage, particularly in the Philippines, where Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) strive to maintain their identities and practices. This study investigates the leadership practices of the Domaget Indigenous Cultural Community in Nueva Ecija through a Descriptive-Quantitative approach, utilizing interviews and survey questionnaires. Findings reveal that leadership within the Domaget and Kalanguya IPs is predominantly male, with leaders aged 61–70 years and possessing limited formal education. Leadership roles, including Chieftains, Elders, and Tribal Leaders, are central to governance and cultural preservation, with elders playing pivotal roles in knowledge transfer. The hierarchical structure is led by the "Mangondem," supported by spiritual and governance roles like "Gangot" and "Subkalan." While the community values peaceful governance and cultural continuity, there is resistance to militaristic defense structures. The study highlights the need for sustainable livelihood opportunities and enhanced knowledge-sharing to foster resilience and social cohesion.

Keywords: *Domaget, Political Practices, Leadership Practices, Indigenous People*

Introduction

The recognition and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) have become increasingly significant in global discourse, particularly in the Philippines. The Domaget Indigenous Cultural Community (ICC) in Nueva Ecija exemplifies a proactive approach to self-governance and cultural preservation. This study highlights the community's leadership

practices, demographic profiles of elders and leaders, and their political structures, which are essential for maintaining cultural integrity and addressing contemporary challenges (Balangon et al., 2023).

The Domaget ICC's commitment to cultural preservation is embodied in the "Budi Mi" initiative, which translates to "what we want" in their Kabolowen language. This initiative

How to cite:

Pastorfide, D. D. (2025). Political and Leadership Practices of The Domaget Indigenous People in Nueva Ecija. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 6(1), 257 – 271. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.06.01.18

serves as a framework for sustainable development that respects ancestral traditions while addressing modern needs. The core philosophy of the initiative is rooted in the community's belief that sustainable development must go hand in hand with the preservation of their cultural identity and the protection of their ancestral lands (Santos & Reyes, 2021). By engaging with development partners through the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP), the Domaget community aims to ensure that their socio-economic aspirations align with their cultural values. This approach is part of a broader movement in the Philippines where Indigenous communities are asserting their right to self-determination and are developing frameworks that respect their unique cultural heritage (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples [NCIP], 2012).

The ADSDPP, as outlined in the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), is designed to integrate sustainable practices that enhance the socio-economic well-being of Indigenous communities while preserving their traditional practices and knowledge systems. For the Domaget ICC, this plan involves a comprehensive strategy that includes the protection of natural resources, the promotion of sustainable agriculture, and the creation of alternative livelihoods that do not compromise their cultural integrity. The incorporation of these strategies within the "Budi Mi" initiative exemplifies a holistic approach to development that bridges the gap between modern governance structures and Indigenous knowledge systems (Ibanez, et.al., 2016).

Such frameworks not only empower the Domaget community but also serve as models for other Indigenous groups facing similar challenges. The collaborative approach, which includes partnerships with local government units, non-governmental organizations, and private sector stakeholders, ensures that the Domaget ICC's initiatives are aligned with national development goals while safeguarding their cultural and environmental heritage. These efforts are crucial for the long-term resilience of Indigenous communities, as they navigate the complex interplay between modern development pressures and the need to protect their traditions (Bansal, et.al., 2023). By

documenting and promoting the "Budi Mi" initiative, the Domaget ICC provides a blueprint for other Indigenous groups seeking to maintain cultural continuity while pursuing sustainable development that benefits both present and future generations (Auger et.al., 2023).

Understanding the demographic characteristics of community leaders is crucial for analyzing leadership dynamics within the Domaget Indigenous Cultural Community (ICC). Leaders in Indigenous communities often serve as cultural custodians, decision-makers, and mediators, making their demographic profile essential for understanding the transmission of traditional knowledge and the enforcement of community norms (Domingo, 2004). These leaders play a pivotal role in maintaining cultural integrity and navigating external pressures.

The study reveals that effective leadership practices, including social networking and mutual assistance systems, are vital for fostering resilience against external pressures such as political marginalization and resource management issues. These traditional practices ensure community cohesion and resource sustainability while addressing external challenges through collective decision-making and support systems (Goh, 2021). Moreover, mutual assistance systems are often rooted in Indigenous values of reciprocity and collective welfare, underscoring their importance in preserving cultural traditions.

By documenting these practices, the research contributes to a broader understanding of Indigenous leadership models that prioritize community well-being and cultural continuity. Leadership in Indigenous communities, such as the Domaget ICC, is often interwoven with cultural traditions and collective values, ensuring that governance is community-centered and inclusive (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs [IWGIA], 2020). These leadership models emphasize adaptability and the ability to balance modern governance challenges with traditional practices. The findings of this study hold significant implications for policy-making and development strategies. By integrating Indigenous perspectives into governance frameworks, policymakers can create more inclusive systems that respect the rights and traditions

of Indigenous Peoples (IPs). This approach not only enhances political representation for Indigenous communities but also ensures that their unique cultural heritage is preserved amid globalization pressures (NCIP, 2004). For instance, the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in resource management and local governance has been shown to yield better environmental outcomes and more sustainable development practices (Mongabay, 2023).

The research also advocates for a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Indigenous communities, particularly in terms of poverty and marginalization. Despite representing a substantial portion of the population, IPs often remain invisible in official statistics due to inadequate data collection methods. This lack of representation exacerbates their vulnerability to social and economic inequalities, highlighting the urgent need for culturally sensitive data collection and policy development (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues [UNPFII], 2020). Ensuring that Indigenous voices are heard and included in national development plans is essential for addressing systemic marginalization and fostering resilience in Indigenous communities.

Addressing these gaps is essential for formulating effective policies that support sustainable development while respecting Indigenous rights. This study serves as a vital resource for stakeholders interested in promoting sustainable development that honors Indigenous rights and traditions. By documenting the leadership practices of the Domaget ICC, it highlights their unique cultural heritage while advocating for frameworks that empower Indigenous communities in decision-making processes affecting their lives.

Methods

The methodology for this study employs a Descriptive-Quantitative research design, which is particularly effective for systematically obtaining information to describe the characteristics of a specific population or phenomenon (Scribbr, 2024). This approach allows researchers to answer questions regarding the "what," "when," "where," and "how" of the research problem, while not delving into

the underlying reasons (Voxco, 2021). The primary aim of this methodology is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the leadership practices within the Domaget Indigenous Cultural Community in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Data gathering will be conducted using interviews and survey questionnaires as the main tools. Surveys are advantageous in descriptive research as they enable the collection of large volumes of data that can be analyzed for frequencies, averages, and patterns (Qualtrics, 2024). The structured nature of questionnaires facilitates quantifiable responses, which are essential for statistical analysis, allowing for a clear depiction of the demographic profile and leadership practices of the respondents (Unimrkt, 2024). Interviews will complement survey data by providing qualitative insights that can enrich the understanding of leadership dynamics within the community. Purposive sampling was utilized to select respondents from the Domaget Indigenous People. This sampling technique is appropriate as it allows researchers to target specific individuals who possess relevant knowledge or experience related to the study's focus (Scribbr, 2024). By selecting community elders and leaders, the study aims to gather rich information that reflects the unique cultural and social structures inherent in their leadership practices. The criteria to select the respondents are the following, must be a member/leader of the IP community, must be of legal age, and lastly, should live of at least 18 years and above in the community. The research locale is situated in Nueva Ecija, a region known for its diverse Indigenous populations. Conducting the study in this locale is significant as it provides an opportunity to explore the specific context and nuances of leadership among the Domaget Indigenous People. This context is essential for understanding how local traditions and social organization influence leadership practices (Enago, 2024).

Result and Discussion

The data presented in section shows the result of the survey about the political and leadership practices of Domaget indigenous people.

The demographic profile of the Elders/Leaders of the Domaget and the Kalanguya ICCs/IPs in Nueva Ecija:

This part of the study presents the demographic profile of the elderly/leaders of the

Domaget and the Kalanguyan ICCs/Ips respondents. The table below shows data on the basic information of the respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Age, Sex, Civil Status, and Educational Attainment

INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age		
20 - 30	11	11.22%
31 - 40	6	6.12%
41 - 50	16	16.33%
51 - 60	20	20.41%
61 - 70	36	36.73%
71 and above	9	9.18%
Total	98	100.00%
Sex		
Male	80	81.63%
Female	18	18.37%
Total	98	100%
Civil Status		
Widowed	18	18.37%
Married	80	81.63%
Total	98	100%
Educational Attainment		
Elementary Level	18	18.37%
Elementary Graduate	17	17.35%
High School Level	11	11.22%
High School Graduate	12	12.24%
College Level	4	4.08%
College Graduate	3	3.06%
Not Applicable	33	33.67%
Total	98	100%

Table 2 shows that the age of the leaders and citizens that were part of the respondents was ranging from 20–70 years old. In terms of sex, the majority of the respondents were composed of the Male with a frequency of 80 or 81.63% of the total respondents, and only a few Females which is 18 or 18.37% of the respondents. In terms of civil status, the majority of the respondents were Married has a frequency of 80 or 81.63% and the widowed were only 18 or 18.37% of the total respondents. In terms of educational attainment, the majority of the respondents do not have any formal education with a frequency of 33 or 33.67% followed by the Elementary level with a frequency of 18 or

18.37% Elementary Graduate with a frequency of 17 or 17.35%. The respondents which are at the high school level were 11 or 11.22% and the High School Graduates were 12 or 12.24% and the fewer percentage were from the college level with a frequency of 4 or 4.08 and only 3 or 3.06% frequency of College Graduates.

The research indicates that the Indigenous People acknowledge the aptitude of a younger member of their society to assume leadership roles and safeguard the community's traditions and culture. Moreover, the dissemination of tribal/cultural values to subsequent generations develops a historically important network of support for Indigenous kids and fosters

heightened consciousness and emotional attachment to the natural world (Brown et al., 2022). The predominance of male leaders in indigenous communities suggests that males continue to be acknowledged as the primary figures of authority and power, surpassing females. The majority of the participants were married, a characteristic commonly observed in community tribes in the Philippines. Marriage is still a prevalent practice, as indicated by the fact that the majority of respondents were married, particularly those in their 30s and older. Finally, the indigenous population has a

predominantly low level of educational attainment, with the majority having either elementary schooling or no education at all. This is primarily due to their isolated locations, which make it difficult for them to access schools. Eduardo and Gabriel (2021) conducted a study that affirmed that IP education is a matter of worldwide and international significance. IPs generally lack access to high-quality education.

The table below shows the data for the profile of the respondents in IP Group and their Position/Status in the community

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by IP Group and Community Position/Status.

INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Position/Status in Community		
Chieftain	3	3.06%
Elder	46	46.94%
Secretary	3	3.06%
Tribal Leader	22	22.45%
Vice President	1	1.02%
Pastor	1	1.02%
Tribal elder	1	1.02%
Citizen	14	14.29%
President	1	1.02%
IPMR	3	3.06%
PIO	3	3.06%
Total	98	100.00%

Table 2 displays the IP Group of the Indigenous People in Carangalan, General Tinio, and Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija. Specifically, the respondent's position/status in the community was as follows: The majority of the respondents were elderly individuals, accounting for 46.94% of the total. The second largest group consisted of tribal leaders, comprising 22.45% of the respondents. Citizens were the third largest group, representing 14.29% of the respondents. The Chieftain, secretary, IPMR, and PIO were at the same percentage and frequency of 3 or 3.06%. Finally, the President, Vice President, and Pastor each had a frequency and percentage of 1 or 1.02% of the total respondents.

The data indicates that the study primarily focused on and gathered responses from two Indigenous Peoples Communities. The two indigenous communities adhered to a traditional

leadership structure, which included recognized Chieftains, Elders, and tribal leaders as integral parts of each community's leadership traditions. As per the CPA Philippines Website (2016), elders are influential and active leaders within indigenous communities. They serve as exemplary models in all facets of socio-economic existence, representing and enforcing order, authority, and justice, and transmitting knowledge and values for the collective benefit of both current and future generations.

The Leadership practices of Elders/leaders of Domaget and the Kalanguya ICCs/IPs in Nueva Ecija Philippines

Political Structure.

Domaget IPs/ICCs Political Structure.

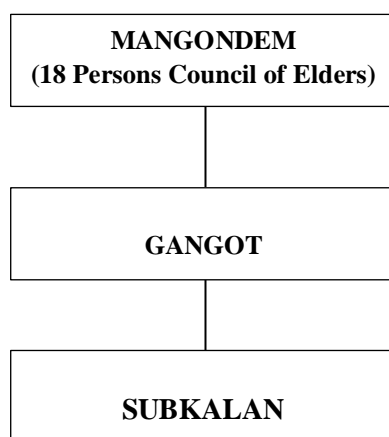


Figure 1. Indigenous Political Structure of Domaget IPs/ICCs

The diagram depicted above illustrates the inherent political framework of the Domaget Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities (IPs/ICCs). The chart illustrates that the Domaget tribe had a total of three hierarchical levels for political titles. The data was sourced from Hon. Emmanuel B. Domingo, a well-regarded figure in the Domaget community and the Provincial IPMR Domaget officer.

The organizational chart of the leadership and governance of the Indigenous People (IP) community highlights their unique political and leadership structure. The Domaget community demonstrates self-governance, with an independent system that allows them to manage and lead their own affairs. This shows that the Domaget IP community operates autonomously, maintaining their own leadership and governance system without relying on external structures.

In the Domaget society, the leader of the Domaget tribe is esteemed as an elder. The "Mangondem" serves as the supreme governing body of Domaget. The tribe's political organization is comprised of a council composed of 18 members from each site. This council serves as the tribe's ultimate source of authority, knowledge, and wisdom. They serve as mediators in resolving disputes, provide spiritual guidance, and safeguard traditional knowledge. The Mangondem plays a crucial role in safeguarding the cultural heritage and traditions of the community, encompassing activities like decision-making, conflict resolution, and the preservation of customs and rites. The practices of the Domaget tribe persist resolutely in

their original territories, contributing to the diverse cultural tapestry of Nueva Ecija. In order to maintain diversity and protect the rights of indigenous populations, it is crucial to save their cultural heritage.

The community holds "**Gangot**" in high esteem as a central character in their cultural and social framework. As the deputy to the Mangondem, the Gangot plays a crucial role in the administration of the tribe. Nevertheless, the decisions taken by the Gangot still necessitate the endorsement of the Mangondem, highlighting a leadership approach that emphasizes collaboration. The Gangot is a symbol of health and capability due to its broad knowledge of the tribe's culture and its ability to function independently. Gangot fulfills important tasks as a spiritual leader, traditional healer, and protector of ancestral knowledge, in addition to his government responsibilities. The character is linked to particular rituals and traditions that are essential to the tribe's cultural heritage, thereby highlighting their diverse significance within the Domaget group. Gangot's significance encompasses not just governing but also other facets of Domaget culture. These duties encompass activities such as providing medical care, facilitating conflict resolution, narrating stories, and safeguarding ancestral wisdom. Furthermore, according to the tribe's belief system, Gangot is highly respected as a guardian of holy locations, serving as a conduit between the material and metaphysical realms. In order to have a genuine comprehension of Gangot's significance, it is imperative to acknowledge the intricate network of cultural

customs and convictions that delineate the character of the Domaget community. Gangot plays a crucial role in safeguarding and promoting the cultural legacy of the Domaget community, which is profoundly rooted in their spiritual, social, and historical background.

"Subkalan" is the third in the political structure line of the Domaget tribe in Nueva Ecija. Subkalan serves as both a healer and a spiritual leader, handling matters related to ancient healing practices and spiritual worship. They also serve as peacemakers.

Finally, the selection of leaders and elders within the community was based on the following qualifications, first, the leader must be

knowledgeable about the rich culture and tradition of the Domaget, second, they must have a good attitude as regarded by the community. Third, the leader must know critical thinking and decision-making, considering the welfare, and the culture and traditions of the community.

Leadership Practices of the Domaget and Kalanguya IPs/ICCs in Nueva Ecija

Leadership Practices of Domaget IPs/ICCs in Nueva Ecija Philippines.

The table below shows the data result about the leadership Practices of Domaget IPs/ICCs.

Social Organization

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Response on Formation of Social Organization of Domaget ICCs/IPs in Nueva Ecija Philippines.

NO.	INDICATORS	FREQUENCY (YES)	%	FREQUENCY (NO)	%	Total %
1	Selecting a leader in the community	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%
2	Forming a council of leaders and elders	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%
3	Calling a meeting of leaders and elders	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%
4	Appointing other leaders or head figures in the community	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%
5	Listening to and providing advice to members in need	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%
6	Collaborating with other groups	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%
7	Establishing a group of warriors or defenders of the community	18	43.90%	23	56.10 %	100.00%
8	Teaching customs and ancestral laws	39	95.12%	2	4.88%	100.00%
9	Planning for the community's livelihood	39	95.12%	2	4.88%	100.00%
10	Transferring the history and culture of the clan	40	97.56%	1	2.44%	100.00%
11	Selecting a leader in the community	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%

The table presented displays the data findings from a survey conducted on the Domaget Indigenous Cultural Community/ Indigenous Peoples Formation of Social Organization in

Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The survey revealed that most of the Domaget ICCs/IPs responded positively to the 10 indicators regarding For-

mation Social Organization, except for indicator 7, "Establishing a group of warriors or defenders of the community." In this case, the majority of respondents answered negatively, with a frequency of 23 or 56.10% of the total respondents. The data above indicates that the indigenous community of Domaget IPs/ICCs has a distinct method of developing their various social organizations. However, the Domaget IPs/ICCs have expressed disagreement or replied negatively to the proposal of forming a group of warriors or defenders for the community.

In addition, when the respondents from the Domaget IPs/ICCs were asked an open-ended question "*Ano pa ang mga kasanayan ng inyong grupo patungkol sa pagbuo ng pang-lipunang taga-pamahala?*" which translates to "What other skills does your group have in forming social organizations?", they provided their responses. The responses were condensed and the outcome revealed that the majority of the Domaget practice was centered around "PAMON-ESABIYAN," which signifies the highest level of connections within the Domaget community. Furthermore, Domaget ensures the strict preservation of key traditions and customs, while also making necessary changes or improvements to those practices that are no longer suitable for the present era. This suggests that the development of the Social Organization of the Domaget is constantly changing over time. According to Domaget, the appointment of leaders is a subject of thorough deliberation by the elders, particularly when there

are multiple groups residing in the town (Dawson et.al, 2021).

The following table displays the facts regarding the Indigenous people's responses in tracing the lineage of the selected leader.

The Domaget community exhibits a strong preference for democratic governance, as evidenced by their regular meetings and collaborative efforts with other groups. These practices facilitate the selection of leaders through communal processes and the formation of councils, highlighting their commitment to participatory governance (NCIP, 2021). The community's approach emphasizes the importance of considering the advice and suggestions of all members, which reinforces democratic principles and fosters an inclusive organizational structure (AIGI, 2024)

Moreover, the Domaget community's Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP), known as "Budi Mi," reflects their aspirations for self-governance and sustainable development. This plan is a product of collective input from community members, ensuring that their voices are heard in decision-making processes (NCIP, 2021). Such initiatives not only demonstrate their inclination towards democracy but also contribute to a well-organized community framework that prioritizes transparency and accountability (Go Vocal, 2024).

In summary, the participatory practices within the Domaget community feature their strong democratic ethos, characterized by collaboration, inclusivity, and a commitment to self-determination.

Genealogy

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Response on Tracing the ancestry of the chosen leader (Genealogy) of the Domaget IPs/ICCs.

NO.	INDICATORS	FREQUENCY (YES)	%	FREQUENCY (NO)	%	Total
1	Having a method to determine one's ancestral lineage.	39	95.12%	2	4.88%	100.00%
2	Is it necessary to have up to the fourth generation of ancestry to be considered as one of the elders or leaders?	9	21.95%	32	78.05%	100.00%

NO.	INDICATORS	FREQUENCY (YES)	%	FREQUENCY (NO)	%	Total
3	Is it important to select leaders who are indigenous to their land?	39	95.12%	2	4.88%	100.00%
4	Is being active in the community and neighboring communities more important in selecting leaders than one's ancestral heritage?	39	95.12%	2	4.88%	100.00%

The table provided displays the survey data regarding the ancestral lineage of the selected leader of the Domaget IPs/ICCs. The data indicates that out of the 4 indicators, 3 of them received an affirmative response, suggesting that the Domaget IPs/ICCs have a distinct method for determining the lineage of selected leaders in the Domaget Community.

An analysis of the data reveals that only indicator number 2, "Is it necessary to have up to the fourth generation of ancestry to be considered as one of the elders or leaders?", received a majority of NO responses. This accounted for a frequency of 32, or 78.05%, of the total respondents. The survey data indicates that having up to the fourth generation of ancestry is not a requirement to be a leader or elder in the Domaget IPs/ICCs community. Conversely, the participants were presented with an unrestricted question: "What additional methods does your group employ in selecting individuals of specific racial backgrounds for senior leadership positions?" The responses to this question were summarized and the common answers were as follows: firstly, a qualified leader should possess extensive knowledge and understanding of the culture and traditions of the community. Secondly, a member of the Domaget IPs/ICCs can be considered a qualified leader or elder if they have resided in the Domaget community for a significant period, actively participating as a citizen, and adhering to the prevailing beliefs. Thirdly, since many of our ancestors have not been officially registered at birth, our method of determining lineage is based on whether an individual is recog-

nized as a native of Domaget and has been residing or engaging with the community for an extended duration. Finally, our race determination system relies on whether an individual is a recognized native of Domaget and has resided or engaged with the community for an extended period, given that many of our ancestors have not been officially documented in birth registrations. Aggregating these replies reveals that the primary and shared qualities for leadership or elder status in the Domaget community are recognition, cultural and traditional expertise, and lifelong residency within the group (Rojas-Sotelo, 2023).

The leadership of Domaget is primarily determined by the members' extensive understanding of the culture and traditions, rather than their genealogy. This demonstrates the members' wisdom in terms of leadership and decision-making, which is rooted in the community's cultural values and practices. The second factor is the individual's presence and recognition within the community, which may be influenced by their age and socioeconomic background. In general, the ability to be a leader can be linked to the individual's social intelligence. Social intelligence refers to the ability to effectively engage in communication and establish connections with others by demonstrating empathy and assertiveness. The ability to understand oneself and practice effective emotional regulation is the source of this knowledge (Garcia-Bulle, 2019).

The following table displays the facts regarding the responses of Indigenous People in the process of reaching a consensus.

Building Consensus

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Response to Making an Agreement of the Domaget Indigenous People in Nueva Ecija (Building Consensus)

NO.	INDICATORS	FREQUENCY (YES)	%	FREQUENCY (NO)	%	Total
1	Does your group engage in community consultations regarding decisions made by the elders or leaders that are related to the development of your community?	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%
2	Take into consideration the community's ideas about additional activities for the development of the community you belong to.	37	90.24%	4	9.76%	100.00%
3	Knows how to listen to the suggestions of other people in the community.	36	87.80%	5	12.20%	100.00%
4	Preserves the traditions and culture of the group.	40	97.56%	1	2.44%	100.00%
5	Open to any culture that may enter the community.	28	68.29%	13	31.71%	100.00%
6	Promotes the tradition and culture of the community.	41	100.00%	0	0.00%	100.00%
7	Conceals the tradition and culture from those outside the group.	16	39.02%	25	60.98%	100.00%

The table above displays the aggregated replies from the survey done by the researcher, indicating the emerging consensus among participants. The poll results indicate that a majority of the respondents agreed or answered affirmatively to six out of the seven indications offered in statement form. Upon closer examination of the findings, it is evident that only the indicator labeled as number 7, which states "Conceals the tradition and culture from those outside the group," received a majority response of NO. This response was given by 25 respondents, accounting for 60.98% of the total

participants. This suggests that the Domaget IPs/ICCs were not concealing their traditions and culture, but rather, they were willing to openly share and display the magnificence of their distinct leadership techniques within the community.

The data presented in the table above indicates that the Domaget IPs/ICCs are receptive to all cultures that may join their community, as seen by the replies to indicator 5 "Open to any culture that may enter the community." This response was given by 28 individuals, accounting for 68.29% of the total respondents. This

conveys a distinct message that the indigenous group, namely the Domaget, were not isolating their community, but rather seeking to expose it to everyone ready to learn and comprehend their way of life, particularly their leadership techniques (Dawson, 2021).

To gain a deeper insight of the leadership practices of Domaget IPs/ICCs, participants were asked an open-ended question: *"What additional skills does your group possess in relation to the skill of Consensus Building?"* Please provide an example. The collated responses referred to a form of communication known as "Torongkohan" or face-to-face talk. Furthermore, it is customary for the elders to frequently engage in negotiations for the collective benefit of the community. Lastly, the elders or chieftains fulfill the role of officials within

the tribe. Most of the Domaget IPs/ICCs reached an agreement primarily through verbal means, with respect and dignity serving as the main foundations for their shared commitment to the betterment of their community.

In addition, the community effectively preserves and upholds its customs and traditions, even while striving for the collective benefit of the community. Additionally, it demonstrates their frequent engagement in consultations with community members prior to making decisions, reaching agreements, and forming treaties that could potentially impact the lives of the Domaget IPs/ICCs residing in the community.

The succeeding table presents the data for the Systems of Mutual Assistance and Security of the Domaget Indigenous People Community.

Systems of Mutual Assistance and Security

Table 6. Ways of helping and defending one's fellow and community in the Domaget in Nueva Ecija. (Systems of Mutual Assistance and Security)

NO.	INDICATORS	FREQUENCY (YES)	%	FREQUENCY (NO)	%	Total
1	Carpooling with other groups.	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%
2	Establishing a council that will listen to the grievances or suggestions of the agreed-upon groups.	39	95.12%	2	4.88%	100.00%
3	Providing free services to those in need within the community.	40	97.56%	1	2.44%	100.00%
4	Appointing each member of every family to participate in irrigation or food distribution during times of calamity.	34	82.93%	7	17.07%	100.00%
5	Appointing each member of every family to participate in irrigation or food distribution during times of calamity.	30	73.17%	11	26.83%	100.00%
6	Every family's preparedness to rescue in danger citizens during times of calamity.	38	92.68%	3	7.32%	100.00%

NO.	INDICATORS	FREQUENCY (YES)	%	FREQUENCY (NO)	%	Total
7	Designating groups to provide immediate medical assistance, such as transport to hospitals, disaster relief, or initial care to the citizens.	37	90.24%	4	9.76%	100.00%

The data presented in the table above illustrates the findings of the poll about the system of mutual help and security. The overall findings of the data indicate that all 7 indicators representing the practices of Domaget IPs/ICCs leadership in terms of the System of Mutual Assistance and Security received a positive response, with the majority of respondents agreeing. Nearly all indicators in these leadership practices had replies of agreement or YES ranging from 70% to 90%. This data represents the genuine friendship and inherent Bayanihan culture inside the Domaget Community. The communal ethos of mutual assistance, particularly in times of adversity, such as natural disasters, was deeply ingrained in the community. Each family was ready and willing to provide aid and support to anyone facing perilous circumstances. This data is derived from the replies to indicator no. 6, which measures the level of preparedness among families to rescue vulnerable citizens during calamities. The frequency of these responses is 38, which accounts for 92.68% of the total respondents. It can be inferred that there was a close tie amongst the families of the community in Domaget IPs/ICCs.

In addition, the existence of a council to attentively consider and resolve recommendations and grievances serves as evidence of the Domaget IPs/ICCs' dedication to maintaining the principles of collaboration, companionship, and mutual support. The response on indicator no. 2, which involves the establishment of a council to address the concerns or ideas of the agreed-upon groups, was reported by 39 respondents, accounting for 95.12% of the total respondents. Indicator number 3, which involves offering free services to those in need in

the community, was reported by 40 respondents, accounting for 97.56% of the total. This indicator had the highest percentage among all the indicators, indicating the strong presence of a unique and authentic culture of mutual aid and security within the Domaget IPs/ICCs community.

The findings emphasize the deeply embedded culture of mutual assistance and solidarity within the Domaget IPs/ICCs community, which is a testament to their strong communal bonds and Bayanihan spirit (Reyes-Garcia et.al., 2022). The high levels of preparedness to assist vulnerable members during calamities and the widespread provision of free services indicate that cooperation and collective well-being are integral to their social fabric (Greenpeace, 2021). These practices not only ensure the community's resilience but also highlight the inclusiveness of their cultural values, where every member, regardless of gender or social status, contributes to and benefits from mutual aid (PhilPapers, 2023). This inclusivity points to an equitable distribution of responsibilities and a shared sense of accountability, further enriching their cultural openness and harmony (Beach House Project, 2023).

From a policy-making perspective, the community's collaborative approach can serve as a model for designing community-based disaster resilience programs and social safety nets. Policies could focus on institutionalizing and scaling their existing practices of mutual support by integrating gender-sensitive strategies to strengthen women's active roles in leadership and decision-making processes (NCIP, 2024). Moreover, fostering partnerships between government and the Domaget community to formalize their grievance-resolution mechanisms and extend these cultural practices to nearby

communities could enhance social cohesion and inclusivity on a broader scale (Greenpeace, 2021). This would ensure that traditional systems of mutual assistance remain preserved while being adapted to meet modern challenges.

Conclusion

From the data above a conclusion was made. The study highlights the strong cultural foundations and traditional leadership practices of the Domaget Indigenous Peoples in Nueva Ecija, emphasizing their reliance on elders and community-centric governance. Despite challenges such as low educational attainment and limited socioeconomic opportunities, these communities maintain a deep commitment to preserving their cultural heritage through leadership selection, dispute resolution, and the transfer of ancestral knowledge to future generations. However, there is a need for interventions that address the gaps in education, economic opportunities, and knowledge-sharing to support the holistic development of these communities. This study underscores the importance of balancing traditional values with modern approaches to ensure sustainable development and the continuity of cultural identity.

Recommendation

It is highly recommended that policymakers should create tailored educational initiatives that respect and integrate indigenous knowledge systems while addressing formal educational gaps. These programs could include mobile learning units, culturally relevant curriculum development, and adult education programs that focus on practical skills, literacy, and vocational training aligned with community needs. Furthermore, Researchers should undertake in-depth studies to map out the specific socioeconomic challenges and potential opportunities in the Domaget communities. These studies should explore viable industries or livelihood projects that align with their cultural practices, such as eco-tourism, agroforestry, or sustainable crafts production.

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