

The level of social studies students on historical sites and cultural heritages

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the awareness of cultural heritage among Social Studies students in Davao del Sur particularly the three institutions namely, University of Mindanao - Digos College (UMDC), Southeastern College of Padada, Inc. (SC), and Davao del Sur State College (DSSC), addressing a gap in understanding and valuing cultural heritage among students in different institutions. In addition, utilizing a descriptive-comparative and descriptive-correlational approach, this study surveyed 306 students across three educational institutions examining their awareness and knowledge levels on cultural heritage. The analysis also investigated potential differences based on demographics, such as sex, institution, year level, and socioeconomic status. Results revealed that the students exhibit a moderate awareness and knowledge about cultural heritages. In the analysis of the differences on the awareness and knowledge based on their demographic profile, it showed that there is no significant difference on the students' level of awareness and knowledge about cultural heritage in terms of students' sex, institution, and socioeconomic status. However, in the year level, a significant difference was found among the students' awareness and knowledge about cultural heritages. Additionally, a significant relationship was reported in correlation between students' level of awareness about cultural heritages and their level of knowledge. Thus, the study recommends enhancing and improving the integration of cultural heritage education within social studies subjects and promoting community-based activities that actively engage students with local historical sites and cultural traditions. By fostering hands-on learning and involvement in heritage education, these may contribute to a deeper and more understanding of cultural heritage among students.

Keywords: students' awareness and perceptions, knowledge, historical sites, cultural heritages

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of cultural heritage has become increasingly prominent in contemporary discussions on sense of place, cultural identity formation, and evolving patterns of community engagement in the 21st century. Cultural heritage serves as a vital foundation through which societies understand their historical continuity and collective identity. According to the UNESCO World Heritage Center (2005), cultural heritage encompasses both tangible and intangible assets inherited from past generations, preserved in the present, and transmitted for the benefit of future generations. This definition underscores the enduring role of cultural heritage in sustaining societal values, traditions, and shared meanings across time.

Despite its intrinsic value, cultural heritage has been subject to both positive and negative influences arising from various social, economic, and developmental factors. Although cultural heritage artifacts and practices traditionally hold significant meaning in people's lives, their importance has diminished in many contexts due to limited public knowledge and appreciation. A primary reason cultural heritage is forgotten, neglected, or damaged is the lack of public awareness, particularly amid urbanization, generational change, revitalization efforts, and rapid social transformation. Empirical evidence suggests that many heritage-valued areas have experienced declining perceived value, contributing to the gradual erosion of cultural, historical, and natural heritage from collective memory and everyday life (Xu & Sofield, 2017).

At the global level, research highlights persistent gaps in cultural heritage awareness among students. An international study conducted by Karadeniz (2020) at Giresun University in Turkey assessed geography students' self-perceived understanding of cultural heritage and found that only 10.3% rated their knowledge as high, while 77% perceived it as moderate and 9.8% as low. These findings emphasize the urgent need to strengthen cultural heritage education, particularly among young people, to ensure sustained awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of heritage resources. Scholars widely assert that safeguarding cultural heritage requires the active participation of all members of society, with particular emphasis on instilling awareness and responsibility among younger generations (Kafadar, 2021; Kamel, 2019; Shinigayamwe, 2020).

Within the Philippine context, studies have similarly identified challenges in integrating cultural heritage education into formal schooling. Ocampo and Delgado (2014) reported difficulties in embedding cultural heritage concepts within the national curriculum, particularly in schools in Balayan and Nasugbu, where inclusion was influenced by broader academic priorities and prevailing societal values. These challenges highlight structural and curricular constraints that may limit students' exposure to heritage education, despite its recognized importance in national identity formation and historical consciousness.

Conversely, recent localized research offers more encouraging insights. A study conducted in Matina, Davao City, Mindanao revealed that undergraduate students in the College of Teacher Education demonstrated an ability to recognize and adapt to the need for cultural heritage education and preservation. The findings indicated a heightened awareness of cultural loss, with students expressing concern over the importance of cultural heritage and the potential consequences of its disappearance. Such perceptions were closely linked to broader

understandings of cultural loss and the role of education in addressing this issue (Magsanay et al., 2024).

Drawing from these international and local studies, the present research was undertaken to examine students' levels of awareness and perceptions of historical sites and cultural heritages. Given the limited number of localized studies focusing on historical sites and cultural heritage awareness, there is a clear need for further investigation, particularly among students majoring in social studies. Social studies students are expected to have substantial exposure to heritage-related content through courses such as Geography, Readings in Philippine History, and ASEAN Cultural Heritage Studies. Consequently, this study seeks to determine the extent to which these students are aware of their cultural heritage and the degree to which they value and prioritize its preservation.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the level of awareness and perceptions of historical sites and cultural heritages among Social Studies students. Specifically, it sought to examine students' demographic profiles, assess their awareness and knowledge of cultural heritages, and analyze differences and relationships among these variables.

1. What is the profile of the Social Studies students in terms of sex, institution, year level, and socio-economic status?
2. What is the level of awareness of Social Studies students regarding cultural heritages in terms of their knowledge of cultural heritages, the importance of historical sites and cultural heritages in education, and the importance of valuing, preserving, and protecting cultural heritages?
3. What is the level of knowledge of Social Studies students regarding cultural heritages in terms of Philippine cultural heritages and tangible and intangible cultural heritages?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of awareness of Social Studies students regarding cultural heritages when analyzed according to their demographic profile?
5. Is there a significant difference in the level of knowledge of Social Studies students regarding cultural heritages when analyzed according to their demographic profile?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the level of awareness of Social Studies students and their level of knowledge regarding Philippine historical sites and cultural heritages?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods and procedures employed in the conduct of the study, encompassing the research design, locale, respondents, sampling technique, research instrument, data gathering procedures, statistical treatment of data, and ethical considerations. These methodological components were systematically integrated to ensure the collection of valid, reliable, and ethically grounded data capable of addressing the objectives of the study.

The study was conducted in the Province of Davao del Sur, Philippines, which is located in the Davao Region in the southeastern part of Mindanao (PhilAtlas, 2024). The respondents were drawn from three higher education institutions in the province that offer the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Social Studies. These institutions included the University of Mindanao–Digos College, the first higher educational institution established in Digos City in 1949; Davao del Sur State College, formerly the Digos Campus of the Southern Philippines Agribusiness and Marine

and Aquatic School of Technology and later converted into a state college through Republic Act No. 11220; and Southeastern College of Padada, Inc., a private, non-sectarian institution located along the national highway in the Municipality of Padada. These institutions were selected to provide a representative sample of Social Studies students within the province.

A quantitative, non-experimental research design was utilized in this investigation. Specifically, the study employed a descriptive-comparative approach, also known as causal-comparative research, which involves comparing groups based on variables that have already occurred without researcher manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, a descriptive-correlational design was applied to determine the relationship between students' levels of awareness and knowledge of historical sites and cultural heritages. Data were gathered solely through survey questionnaires, with no intervention introduced, allowing for the objective description, comparison, and analysis of existing conditions among the respondents.

The respondents of the study were limited to first-year to third-year Social Studies students enrolled in the three identified tertiary institutions. Slovin's formula was employed to determine the appropriate sample size from the total population of 1,306 students, ensuring an acceptable level of accuracy while making the study manageable. Using this formula, a total of 306 students were identified as respondents. Stratified random sampling, specifically the proportionate stratified method, was applied by grouping the population according to year level to ensure balanced representation and minimize sampling bias (Sharma, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data collection was conducted during the last two weeks of August 2024.

The primary research instrument used in the study was a structured questionnaire designed to measure students' awareness and knowledge of historical sites and cultural heritages. The instrument consisted of three major sections: demographic profile, awareness, and knowledge. Content validity was established through evaluation by a panel of experts in the field. The demographic section gathered information on respondents' sex, institution, year level, and socioeconomic status, with the inclusion of names made optional to protect anonymity. The awareness section was adapted and modified from the instruments developed by Kuscevic (2021) and Kafadar (2021) and measured students' awareness across three indicators: knowledge of Philippine cultural heritages, the importance of historical sites and cultural heritages in education, and the importance of valuing, preserving, and protecting cultural heritages. Responses were interpreted using a five-point scale ranging from "not at all aware" to "extremely aware."

The knowledge section of the questionnaire was adapted from Karadeniz (2020) and assessed students' understanding of cultural heritages in terms of Philippine cultural heritage sites and the distinction between tangible and intangible cultural heritages. The first component evaluated students' ability to identify culturally significant places in the Philippines and the specific heritage associated with each site. The second component assessed students' knowledge of tangible and intangible heritage and their ability to classify examples accordingly. Descriptive levels of knowledge were determined using scaled score ranges corresponding to varying degrees of awareness, from very low to very high.

Data gathering followed a systematic process to ensure ethical compliance and data integrity. Prior to data collection, formal permission and approval were secured from the heads of the education departments of the three participating institutions through the submission of letters and permits. Eligible respondents were then identified, and informed consent was obtained before participation. Clear instructions were provided to the respondents regarding the completion of the questionnaire. After administration, all accomplished questionnaires were retrieved, and respondents' identities were kept strictly confidential. The collected data were subsequently

encoded, organized, and secured using Microsoft Excel before being subjected to statistical analysis.

Appropriate statistical tools were employed to analyze the data in accordance with the research objectives. Frequency and relative frequency were used to describe the distribution of respondents' demographic characteristics. The mean was utilized to determine the levels of awareness and knowledge of historical sites and cultural heritages. An independent-samples t-test was applied to examine differences in awareness and knowledge based on sex, while analysis of variance was used to determine differences based on institution, year level, and socioeconomic status. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to establish the relationship between students' level of awareness and their level of knowledge of historical sites and cultural heritages.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Informed consent was secured from both institutional authorities and individual respondents, ensuring that participants were fully aware of the study's purpose and procedures. The researcher assured respondents that participation posed no physical or psychological risk and that their involvement was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were upheld by excluding respondents' names from the final report and safeguarding all collected data. The researcher also adhered to principles of academic integrity by avoiding plagiarism, fabrication, and deception, and by properly acknowledging all sources used. Any potential conflicts of interest were disclosed to appropriate academic authorities to maintain transparency and uphold the ethical standards of scholarly research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study based on the data gathered from 306 Social Studies students enrolled in three higher education institutions in Davao del Sur. Using a quantitative, non-experimental research design with descriptive-comparative and descriptive-correlational approaches, data were collected through a validated survey questionnaire measuring students' demographic characteristics, levels of awareness, and levels of knowledge regarding historical sites and cultural heritages. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across year levels, while statistical analyses included frequency and percentage distribution, means, independent-samples t-tests, analysis of variance, chi-square tests, and Pearson product-moment correlation. The discussion that follows is grounded entirely on these data and interprets the findings in direct relation to the objectives of the study.

The demographic profile of the respondents provides essential context for understanding the results. Of the 306 participants, 182 students (59.48%) were female and 124 (40.52%) were male, indicating a higher participation rate among female students. This distribution suggests that women constitute a substantial proportion of Social Studies enrollees in the participating institutions, which may have implications for engagement with cultural and heritage-related topics. In terms of institutional affiliation, the majority of respondents came from Southeastern College of Padada, Inc., accounting for 276 students (90.20%), while 17 students (5.56%) were from Davao del Sur State College and 13 students (4.25%) from the University of Mindanao–Digos College. This imbalance reflects the relative population size of Social Studies students across the institutions rather than sampling bias. With respect to year level, the sample was evenly distributed, with 102 students (33.33%) each from first, second, and third year, ensuring comparability across

academic progression. Regarding socioeconomic status, most respondents identified as poor (175 students or 57.19%) or low income (105 students or 34.31%), with progressively fewer students in the lower middle class (5.88%), middle class (1.96%), upper middle income (0.33%), and high income (0.33%), and none identifying as rich. This predominance of economically disadvantaged students suggests that many respondents may have limited financial access to heritage sites, travel, or enrichment activities, which is an important consideration when interpreting levels of awareness and knowledge.

In examining students' awareness of cultural heritages in terms of Philippine cultural heritages, the findings revealed an overall mean of 4.10, interpreted as moderately aware. The highest mean score was obtained by the statement "Residents play an important role in preserving cultural heritages" with a mean of 4.21, indicating that students strongly recognize the role of local communities in safeguarding heritage resources. This suggests an appreciation of shared responsibility and aligns with studies emphasizing community participation as a cornerstone of heritage preservation, particularly in culturally diverse contexts. In contrast, the statement "I am aware about Philippine historical sites" yielded the lowest mean of 3.87, although still within the moderately aware range. This result implies that while students acknowledge the importance of heritage in general, their familiarity with specific historical sites may be limited, possibly due to reduced experiential exposure such as field visits or localized learning activities. Overall, these results indicate that students possess a general conceptual awareness of Philippine cultural heritage but may lack deeper, site-specific knowledge, highlighting the need for experiential and place-based learning approaches.

When awareness was assessed in terms of the importance of cultural heritages in education, the overall mean was 4.14, also described as moderately aware. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement "To sustain our traditions and customs" at 4.27, reflecting students' strong belief that education plays a critical role in preserving traditions and customs. Similarly, high means were observed for learning about cultural heritage and its values (4.22) and understanding the importance of heritage preservation (4.22). These results suggest that students view cultural heritage education as integral to identity formation and continuity. Conversely, the statement "To remember the old time" obtained the lowest mean of 4.01, indicating that students may place relatively less emphasis on recalling the past compared to sustaining living traditions. This pattern suggests a contemporary orientation toward heritage as a dynamic and evolving aspect of identity rather than solely as historical memory. While students recognize the educational value of cultural heritage, their moderate awareness across several indicators points to the need for deeper integration of heritage education that explicitly connects historical understanding with present-day relevance and social cohesion.

Students' awareness of the importance of valuing, preserving, and protecting cultural heritages yielded an overall mean of 4.17, interpreted as moderately aware. The highest mean was observed for the statement "Historical sites should be protected" at 4.35, indicating a strong consensus on the necessity of protecting heritage sites. High levels of awareness were also evident for avoiding damaging behaviors and recognizing heritage protection as a civic responsibility. These findings suggest that students possess a strong normative understanding of heritage conservation. However, the statement "Our cultural heritages is not sufficiently protected" recorded the lowest mean of 3.87, indicating some uncertainty or limited awareness regarding the adequacy of existing protection measures. This gap suggests that while students value heritage protection in principle, they may be less informed about real-world challenges such as policy limitations, funding constraints, or environmental threats. Overall, the results indicate a high level

of consciousness about preservation ideals, coupled with a moderate understanding of practical realities.

A synthesis of the three awareness indicators revealed an overall mean of 4.13, classified as moderately aware. Among the indicators, awareness of valuing, preserving, and protecting cultural heritages obtained the highest mean at 4.17, followed by the importance of cultural heritages in education at 4.14, and Philippine cultural heritages at 4.10. These findings indicate that students are generally aware of the significance of cultural heritage, particularly in terms of preservation and educational value, but their awareness remains at a moderate level. This suggests that while foundational awareness exists, there is room for enhancement through more immersive, context-rich educational strategies that encourage active engagement rather than passive recognition.

In terms of knowledge of cultural heritages, the overall mean was 3.29, interpreted as moderately aware. Notably, students demonstrated higher knowledge of tangible and intangible cultural heritages, with a mean of 3.82, compared to knowledge of Philippine cultural heritages, which obtained a mean of 2.76 and was interpreted as somewhat aware. This disparity indicates that students are more familiar with conceptual distinctions between tangible and intangible heritage than with specific heritage sites and their associated cultural significance within the Philippines. This finding suggests that instruction may emphasize general concepts more than localized content. The lower knowledge of Philippine cultural heritages highlights the need to strengthen local heritage education to deepen students' understanding of specific sites, traditions, and cultural practices within their national context.

Analysis of differences in students' awareness of cultural heritages based on sex revealed no significant difference, as indicated by a p-value of 0.237, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Although female students obtained a slightly higher mean score (4.174) than male students (4.077), the difference was not statistically significant. This finding suggests that awareness of cultural heritage is not influenced by gender, possibly due to similar curricular exposure and learning environments for both male and female students.

Similarly, no significant difference in awareness was found when students were grouped according to institution, with a p-value of 0.270. Although students from the University of Mindanao–Digos College obtained a higher mean awareness score (4.443) compared to those from Davao del Sur State College (4.084) and Southeastern College of Padada, Inc. (4.124), these differences were not statistically significant. This result indicates that institutional affiliation does not substantially influence students' awareness of cultural heritages, likely reflecting the presence of comparable curricular standards across institutions.

In contrast, a significant difference in awareness was observed when students were grouped according to year level. The analysis yielded a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference. Mean awareness scores increased progressively from first year (3.875) to second year (4.179) and third year (4.351). This pattern suggests that awareness of cultural heritages develops with academic progression, likely due to cumulative exposure to Social Studies content and increased cognitive maturity as students advance through their programs.

No significant difference in awareness was found when students were grouped according to socioeconomic status, as indicated by a p-value of 0.287. This result suggests that students' awareness of cultural heritages is relatively consistent across socioeconomic groups, possibly because cultural heritage topics are embedded within the curriculum and not heavily dependent on personal financial resources.

With regard to knowledge of cultural heritages, no significant difference was found between male and female students, with a p-value of 0.936. This indicates that gender does not play a significant role in students' knowledge levels. Similarly, no significant difference in knowledge was observed across institutions, as reflected by a p-value of 0.359, suggesting that institutional context does not substantially affect students' acquisition of heritage-related knowledge.

However, a significant difference in knowledge emerged when students were grouped according to year level, with a p-value of less than 0.001. Mean knowledge scores increased from first year (5.971) to second year (6.676) and third year (7.108), demonstrating a clear trend of cumulative knowledge acquisition. This finding indicates that as students progress academically, their understanding of cultural heritages deepens, reflecting effective curricular scaffolding and learning continuity.

No significant difference in knowledge was found based on socioeconomic status, as indicated by a p-value of 0.971. This suggests that socioeconomic background does not significantly influence students' knowledge of cultural heritages, reinforcing the idea that formal education can mitigate disparities in access to cultural knowledge.

Finally, the relationship between students' awareness and knowledge of cultural heritages was examined using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The analysis yielded an r-value of 0.293 with a p-value of less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables. This result suggests that higher levels of awareness are associated with higher levels of knowledge. Although the strength of the correlation is moderate, it underscores the interdependence of awareness and knowledge in heritage education, implying that increasing students' awareness may contribute to deeper understanding and vice versa.

In summary, the findings reveal that Social Studies students in Davao del Sur exhibit moderate levels of awareness and knowledge regarding historical sites and cultural heritages. Awareness and knowledge increase significantly with year level, while sex, institution, and socioeconomic status do not produce significant differences. The positive relationship between awareness and knowledge highlights the importance of integrated educational strategies that simultaneously promote conceptual understanding and active engagement with cultural heritage. These results contribute to the growing body of literature on heritage education and provide empirical support for enhancing curricular and experiential approaches to strengthen students' cultural consciousness and appreciation, thereby setting the stage for informed preservation efforts and future research.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine the level of awareness and knowledge of Social Studies students regarding historical sites and cultural heritages and to examine the differences and relationships among these variables when analyzed according to selected demographic factors. Using a quantitative, non-experimental design with descriptive-comparative and descriptive-correlational approaches, data were gathered from 306 students drawn through stratified random sampling from three higher education institutions in Davao del Sur. The use of validated survey instruments and appropriate statistical tools ensured that the findings were systematically derived and grounded in empirical evidence.

The results revealed that the respondent population was predominantly female, largely enrolled at Southeastern College of Padada, Inc., and mostly came from poor and low-income

socioeconomic backgrounds, with equal representation across first-, second-, and third-year levels. These demographic characteristics provided important contextual insight into the students' learning environment and access to cultural resources. Despite these variations, the findings demonstrated that sex, institutional affiliation, and socioeconomic status did not significantly influence students' levels of awareness or knowledge of cultural heritages. Only year level emerged as a significant factor, underscoring the role of academic progression and sustained educational exposure in shaping students' cultural awareness and knowledge.

Overall, Social Studies students exhibited a moderate level of awareness of Philippine cultural heritages, the importance of cultural heritage in education, and the value of preserving, protecting, and valuing cultural heritage, with mean scores of 4.10, 4.14, and 4.17, respectively. These results indicate that students generally recognize the significance of cultural heritage in identity formation, education, and societal development. However, this awareness remains largely conceptual, as reflected in students' comparatively lower familiarity with specific Philippine historical sites. This suggests that while students understand the importance of heritage, their engagement with concrete, localized heritage experiences may be limited.

In terms of knowledge, students demonstrated a stronger understanding of the distinction between tangible and intangible cultural heritages, with a mean score of 3.82, compared to their knowledge of specific Philippine cultural heritages, which obtained a mean of 2.76. This imbalance suggests that instruction may emphasize general heritage concepts over in-depth exploration of local and national heritage sites. Given that Social Studies curricula include subjects related to history and cultural heritage, these findings imply that current instructional approaches may not sufficiently translate curricular content into deep, context-specific knowledge. The absence of experiential learning opportunities such as fieldwork or field trips, possibly due to outcome-based learning constraints and financial considerations, may have contributed to this gap.

The analysis further established that year level significantly influenced both awareness and knowledge of cultural heritages, with third-year students demonstrating higher levels than their first- and second-year counterparts. This pattern highlights the cumulative effect of curricular exposure and reinforces the effectiveness of progressive learning structures in enhancing students' cultural understanding over time. Conversely, the lack of significant differences based on sex, institution, and socioeconomic status suggests that cultural heritage education within the participating institutions is relatively equitable, providing students with comparable opportunities to develop awareness and knowledge regardless of background.

Importantly, the study found a significant positive relationship between students' awareness and their knowledge of cultural heritages, indicating that increases in awareness are associated with corresponding increases in knowledge. This finding emphasizes the interrelated nature of these constructs and suggests that efforts to enhance awareness can serve as a foundation for deeper learning and understanding. Conversely, limited awareness may constrain the development of knowledge, underscoring the need for integrated educational strategies that address both dimensions simultaneously.

Taken together, the findings affirm that while Social Studies students possess a foundational awareness and moderate knowledge of cultural heritages, there remains substantial room for improvement, particularly in relation to Philippine cultural heritage sites and localized contexts. These results underscore the importance of strengthening heritage education through inclusive and experiential learning approaches, curriculum enhancement, and the strategic use of digital resources to address financial and logistical constraints. Cultural events, heritage immersion

projects, virtual tours, and collaborations with local cultural groups may serve as effective means of deepening students' engagement and understanding.

Moreover, the significant role of year level highlights the need for faculty members to maintain and further strengthen tiered curricula that progressively build cultural heritage content and complexity across academic levels. Aligning awareness initiatives with explicit learning outcomes through reflective discussions, assessments, and applied tasks can help transform awareness into sustained knowledge. Finally, future research may build upon these findings by examining the long-term impact of heritage education initiatives and comparing the effectiveness of various instructional approaches, thereby contributing to the continuous improvement of cultural heritage education and preservation efforts.

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