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# VOICES OF HERITAGE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PRESERVING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL TRADITIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores community involvement in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and its significance on the perception, experience and contribution of the community members towards the maintenance of a local tradition. It seeks to determine how cultural identity, intergenerational transmission of knowledge, modernization and institutional support interrelate to determine the continuity of heritage. A qualitative researcher was used where a qualitative research design was used. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 participants who comprised of community leaders, artisans, culture officers, and the representatives of the youth in cultural villages and heritage organizations. The information was gathered with the help of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation and analyzed with the help of thematic analysis to determine main patterns and thoughts with the help of Nvivo software. The paper revealed five major themes, including cultural identity and belonging, intergenerational transmission, modernization and adaptation, institutional support, and preservation challenges. Findings show that community pride, mentoring, storytelling, apprenticeship and collective interaction with institutions are key to the continuity of ICH. There are new opportunities as well as threats brought by modern forces including technology and tourism and the economic constraints and disengagement of the youth have continued to pose a challenge. The study is valuable to the field of heritage research as it focuses on the first-person experience and voice of community members, with the emphasis on adaptive strategies and dynamic ICH. The results have practical implication on policy makers, teachers, and heritage organizations, focusing on participatory models that enable communities and make intangible cultural practices in modern settings sustainable.

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**KEYWORDS:** Intangible Cultural Heritage, Community Participation, Intergenerational Transmission, Cultural Identity, Heritage Preservation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Preservation of intangible cultural heritage has been experiencing growing interest over recent decades as communities and researchers have realized the importance of traditions, oral histories, rituals, and performing arts to the maintenance of cultural identity and social cohesion. The intangible cultural traditions as opposed to tangible heritage like monuments or artifacts are dynamic in nature and transmitted through practice, knowledge and community involvement and, as such, their preservation is a complex and context-based endeavor (Aldegheishem, 2023). It has been found that community involvement is critical in ensuring culture continuity as it enhances intergenerational knowledge and social connections (Ding et al., 2025). Though these have been done, there are several factors like globalization, urbanization, and technological changes that are threatening to eliminate most practices, and thus, new approaches that ensure modernization does not override preservation (Fontanella Pisa et al., 2025). Thus, the discussion of the voices of the communities and their role in keeping the intangible cultural traditions alive is still an important field of research in heritage studies (Anthony, 2023).

The current empirical studies reveal in the last several decades the importance of the role played by community participation in keeping the intangible cultural traditions alive and reveal that in most cases, without the active participation of the members of the community, many of the practices are likely to fade away or change beyond recognition (Cano & Hofmeister, 2022). Likewise, in a case study of the traditional dance groups of the indigenous communities in Latin America, the researchers also discovered that when the seniors of the community joined the school to introduce the traditional dance into extra-curricular activities, the number of students involved in the activity was significantly increased and the dancers had a sense of greater cultural pride and identity (Deng et al., 2023).

Furthermore, when the initiatives related to heritage preservation were planned participatory i.e., when the members of the community were actively involved in planning what and how to preserve their results were more likely to be sustainable and more conscious of the local peculiarities (Jiang et al., 2025). As an example, an indigenous group in Sub-Saharan Africa in a participatory documentation project of traditional weaving was able to successfully create a community-managed collection of patterns, songs and weaving methods; this data has in turn been used to educate younger women in the craft resulting in

the resurrection of long-lost designs (Gorla et al., 2025).

The members of an ageing population usually complain about the loss of traditional rituals in areas where there is a high rate of economic transition, with the young age group perceiving some rituals as old fashioned and irrelevant (Li, 2025). But in the instances where local NGOs or cultural institutions collaborate with communities in offering these platforms like heritage displays, community theaters or digital storytelling initiatives the younger generations prove more willing to participate, provided the practices are personalized to meet the modern medium without eroding the primary principles (Hou et al., 2022). This implies that an application of modern technology, which is applied sensitively and inclusively, can strengthen community involvement and not weaken tradition (Houweling & Grünberger, 2024).

Nevertheless, the difficulties are also pointed out by empirical evidence. In a single ethnographic description of a fishing community living on the coast, whose boat-building songs were commercialized as tourist attractions, the elders lamented that the young musicians did not know the context and spiritual meanings of the songs and because this they would change or omit certain stanzas to fit the audience preferences and compromised authenticity (Johnco et al., 2021). Equally, when a survey was carried out amongst people in a traditional craft village, even though the tourist demand had economic benefits, most respondents had the feeling that they were under pressure to simplify or standardize the traditional designs to produce them in large quantities a factor that ultimately resulted in the homogenization and death of regional styles (Khairani, 2022).

Policy aspects have also been investigated in the academic literature: analysis of the effects of legal and institutional environments on the preservation of ICH indicates that with governments introducing inclusive policies that acknowledge community rights and facilitate the establishment of grassroots efforts, the participation of the community in the process intensifies significantly (Khairani & Barus, 2024). As an example, a national heritage policy change in one of the South Asian nations that created community heritage councils led to a number of small but influential projects out of communal oral archives to youth-based revival of traditional crafts that overall improved the cultural vitality and empowerment locally (Gholipour et al., 2023). Quite on the contrary it has been observed that top-down heritage management without community

consultation often resulted in tokenistic work and little local participation and eventual failure of preservation programs (Liu, 2022).

Furthermore, the available empirical literature gives a multifaceted picture: the presence of intangible cultural traditions becomes feasible and even flourishes when the communities are incorporated into the preservation processes, which occurs particularly when the methods of participation, inclusivity are applied to the issues and address the changing social realities (Liu et al., 2022). At the same time, commercialization, generational shift, economic pressure, and lack of institutional support continue to be the threats to the life of ICH (Lian et al., 2025). This body of evidence underscores the need and urgency of the study that places the community voices at its centre and considers how the collective practices, the local agency and heritage policies converge when creating the preservation of intangible cultural traditions (Ma & Mohame, 2023).

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage has become a burning problem because of the escalating dangers of continuity of traditional knowledge, practices and expressions, defining identity of a community by globalization, urbanization and cultural homogenization (Luo et al., 2025). Knowledge on how communities define, experience and take active part in terms of maintenance of their intangible traditions is a critical constituent towards its sustainability (McKenzie et al., 2024). The research is significant, as it could help to draw attention to the active participation of the local stakeholders in the cultural expression maintenance, reveal barriers and facilitators of the involvement, and present information to the policymakers, cultural organizations, and heritage professionals who may

wish to take a more comprehensive and community-based approach to preservation (Özsoy et al., 2025). The community voices contribute to the study to contribute to a greater understanding of how the intangible cultural heritage is being lived in, enjoyed, and passed on to the next generations, which demonstrates the importance of participative strategies in the preservation of cultural diversity and promotion of social integration (Michael et al., 2023).

However, despite the broad literature regarding preservation of intangible cultural heritage most of them are institutional, documentation-related, and expert-based initiatives, but there is little consideration of how the community members who are the main guardians of cultural practices experience and perceive this (Pai et al., 2025). The current literature usually focuses on policy frameworks or the tourism-based preservation without considering the part the local communities play in their daily life by defining, appreciating, and maintaining intangible practices in their own way (Moore et al., 2020). In addition, empirical studies examining the emotional, social, and inter-generational aspects of community engagement are inadequate especially in the context as to how modernization and globalization affects the dynamics (Puig, 2025). The absence of researches combining both the conventional and modern methods of cultural transmission, including digital storytelling or youth-based initiatives is also lacking (Schimmelpfennig & Muthukrishna, 2025). This paper attempts to fill these gaps by focusing the voice of the community to understand how individuals perceive, experience, and contribute to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in their respective cultural settings (Mthembu et al., 2023).

Research Questions	Research Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do community members define and interpret intangible cultural heritage?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify community perceptions of intangible cultural heritage and its significance.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the mechanisms through which cultural knowledge is transferred across generations?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To examine intergenerational knowledge transmission processes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do modernization and policy interventions affect local cultural practices?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To explore how modernization influences cultural preservation efforts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What strategies are employed to sustain or revitalize heritage traditions?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To analyze institutional and community strategies that support cultural heritage sustainability.</li> </ul>

Nevertheless, studies have indicated that, despite this development, little is known on how communities themselves perceive and experience the process of preservation. Most researchers are more concerned with the technical elements, including policy frameworks, cultural mapping or digital archiving without focusing on the lived experiences and emotional relationships of people in the community to their heritage. Community-based

heritage preservation domain aims to address this gap by preempting the views, interest and problems of people who are directly engaged in sustaining cultural continuity. Community agency and collective identity are seen as important in this approach because it holds that no sustainable preservation practice is possible without identification of the intangible meanings surrounding the daily cultural practice.

These objectives and questions, as provided in Table 1, aim to extend the knowledge regarding the relevance of intangible cultural heritage by communities in their survival and transformation. Bringing in focus on the community stories and participatory experiences, this research not only informs the theoretical debate on cultural sustainability, but also offers a practical information to plan culturally aware preservation programs to respect diversity, identity and continuity in changing world.

This paper is dedicated to the research of the qualitative elements of the community engagement in the process of preservation and transfer of the traditional art as one of the essential elements of intangible cultural heritage. By examining the perceptions of community members, experiences and contribution in the maintenance of traditional practice such as folk performance, crafts, calligraphy and ceremonial arts, the study will seek to understand the continuation of culture in the existing social environments better. Through the emphases of cultural implications, social role and creative adaptation, the research will make contributions to the literature with a new discussion on participatory paradigms of the conservation of the culture and localized innovation in the practice of heritage.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage relies heavily on community engagement, as local participants serve as the primary custodians of traditional knowledge and practices. Existing studies emphasize the need to understand how community members perceive, experience, and contribute to sustaining cultural expressions amidst modernization and globalization. The literature review demonstrates that there is no thorough research on the community-based preservation strategies with a focus on the subjective and emotional aspects of heritage involvement.

## 3. COMMUNITY IDENTITY & BELONGING

The intangible cultural heritage is based on community identity and belonging since it defines how people perceive, experience and contribute towards continuity of the culture. ICH represents collective symbols, rituals and practices that unite individuals to their common past, making a person feel part of an entirety and the recognition they have among themselves in a community (Tan et al., 2025). Cohen (1985) defines the community not just in terms of physical location but emotional attachment and meaning-making, which, in most instances, has been passed along using cultural expressions in the

same way that festivals or oral storytelling, or even traditional crafts (Nagata et al., 2024). Empirical research has shown that involvement in heritage activities enhances social cohesion and identity, and makes this stronger in situations where people of many cultures converge, or where society rapidly undergoes modernization (F. Wang et al., 2025). As an illustration, the rituals and performances often conducted by the community are a statement of cultural identity in resisting cultural homogenization, as they help in intergenerational communication and pride (Chaowu Xie et al., 2025). When societies unite in their bid to save traditions, they re-identify themselves whilst as well adjusting to societal transformations (Hairuo Wang et al., 2025). In addition, feeling of belonging leads to the investment of emotions, which encourages people to preserve and pass the practices to the next generations (Pang & Wu, 2023). Thus, community identity and community belonging are essential concepts in studying the ICH preservation (Ide, 2025). It emphasizes the cultural participation as not only a tradition preservation issue, but as a dynamic state of collective agency, endurance and a cultural definition against the social change (Chaowu Xie et al., 2025).

## 4. INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

ICH only thrives whereby communities in their constant transmission of the same to the next generation do so by teaching, imitating and participation. According to scholars, this form of transmission is dynamic and adaptive, and it is not a mere reproduction of the past, but rather, cultural meanings are interpreted by the younger generations in new settings. The continuity and renewal process makes the culture of communities alive (Pangesti et al., 2024).

Empirical research identifies that when the elderly and the young people participate in their mutual learning processes through a process of storytelling, ritual involvement or apprenticeship, cultural practices become stronger and more authentic (Yu et al., 2025). To illustrate it with intergenerational work with community festivals increases cultural pride and strengthens the sense of belongingness (Ahmed & Shaban, 2025). On the other hand, the diminishing engagement among the youths, attributed to the migration to urban areas, compulsory schooling, and access to globalized media is a big challenge to continuity (Park & Park, 2023).

To support these problems, there are a number of projects that focus on the involvement of youth and digital innovation, reactivating the endangered

traditions with the help of participatory documentation and social media (van Wieringen et al., 2025). Essentially, intergenerational transmission is a form of educative and emotional process that enables communities through heritage belonging, resilience, and collective identity within the cultural environment that is constantly evolving (Siliutina et al., 2024).

## 5. CULTURAL ADAPTATION & CHANGE

The survival of intangible cultural heritage is connected with the cultural change and cultural adaptation since traditions have to be modified because of the changing social, economic and technological context. Instead of perceiving change as the threat to authenticity, the scholars propose that changeability is one of the distinctive characteristics of living heritage (Seabra et al., 2025). The communities keep on negotiating between holding onto traditional values and adapting to modern realities so that the heritage would not be irrelevant (Skublewska-Paszkowska et al., 2022).

This adjustment process enables the cultural expressions to serve as roots of belonging and catalysts of change (Hytman et al., 2025). Rituals, performances and craft works are empirically known to be subjects of community changes so that communities can adjust them to the contemporary lifestyle without losing the symbolic meaning (Morales & Burnett-Zeigler, 2025). Indicatively, renegotiating old practices to suit digital platforms or tourism situations has the potential to renew the involvement of communities, as long as it is done sensitively and with local authority (Sun et al., 2024).

On the same note, Adaptation fosters the engagement of the youth by relating the past to the emerging cultural interests, one of them being the media narration and creative industries (Tan et al., 2022). Hence, the cultural adaptation as viewed through the lens of community members offers present valuable information regarding the way members interpret and cope with change (Albishi, 2025). Adaptation in this sense is not a loss to culture, but a strategic bargaining of survival, that is, the strength, creativeness, and shifting identity of communities that preserve their intangible heritage (Thom & Grimes, 2022).

## 6. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT & POLICY INFLUENCE

The institutional support and policy frameworks are crucial in determining the way communities participate in the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage. Prior studies suggested proper policy frameworks should no longer be confined to

documentation but should be more focused on empowering the local custodians to be at the forefront of the preservation efforts (Wu et al., 2025). Empirical research indicates that participation and continuity of culture is better in the inclusive heritage policies where the consultation and capacity building techniques are stressed (Trček, 2022).

Nonetheless, preservation that is driven by policies is usually associated with bureaucracy, top-down application, and misrepresentation of culture (Wu et al., 2025). Furthermore, heritage programs that fail to put into consideration the voices of the community by designing them end up converting living traditions into lifeless museum artifacts (Xie, 2022). But on the other hand, effective institutional involvement in this context can be achieved through government facilitation instead of government direction practices such as sponsoring community bestowed festivals, educational activities and online documentation initiatives (Xu et al., 2024).

Moreover, heritage education and policy can be strengthened by having greater intergenerational transmission and local ownership, so that preservation remains a priority to the community (Li, 2025). The institutional support, thus, should be participatory and situational that encourages collaboration, as opposed to control. The interaction between policy influence and community agency has greatly led to the realization that there must be governance frameworks that enable communities to be equal partners in the protection of their intangible cultural traditions (Zhang et al., 2023).

## 7. CHALLENGES & THREATS

Although there is increasing global awareness of the intangible cultural heritage. There are still many issues which jeopardize its conservation, particularly when the issue of community participation is considered (Hanbing Wang et al., 2025). Globalization, modernization and migration has increased the cultural homogenization which is undermining the traditional knowledge systems as well as decreasing the generation to generation transmission (Zhang et al., 2024). The young generations are getting more and more separated with the traditional practices as something which do not fit with new-age ambitions or financial interests (Poplawska, 2025). The transition of the communal life to the urbanized, technology-driven societies also interferes with the spaces where cultural exchange is taking place by default (Zhao et al., 2024).

There are also threats of economic pressures and commercialization. Although cultural tourism and heritage industries have the potential to offer

financial benefits, they usually result in commodification of the culture which deprives practices of spiritual and community significance (Pai et al., 2025). These threats are made worse by environmental shifts, digital exploitation and political instability which pose a challenge to continuity in communities (Hiswara et al., 2023). These compound issues cannot be solved without empowering communities to have agency, resources, and making decisions (Yang, 2025). Through the inclusion of local voices and experience, research can also help highlight how communities cope with these forces, bargain change and resilience to ensure that

the intangible heritage continues to be an active and dynamic entity and not a dead thing of the past (Van Ditmars, 2022).

Figure 1 illustrates the structural organization of the reviewed literature, highlighting the key thematic areas that underpin the study. It maps the relationships between the main research domains community identity, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and institutional support and their collective role in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. The layout visually demonstrates how these interconnected themes inform the conceptual framework and guide the study's analytical focus.



Figure 1: Layout of Literature

## 8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research design used in this study was based on qualitative research that focuses on the lived experiences of the participants as well as the meaning that they assign to the social phenomenon. It was found that the qualitative research is the most relevant to investigate the meaning of the community members, experience of, and contribution to preservation of the intangible cultural heritage as the cultural heritage is socially constructed and is integrated into the everyday practices, values and traditions of the community. The phenomenological design was used to reflect the lived experiences of

people involved in preservation of culture and the ethnographic aspects were used in order to observe cultural practices in their natural environment. The research was able to record individual accounts as well as the contextual cultural engagements due to this approach, which gave an in-depth perspective of the heritage practices and community engagement.

This figure 2 displays the frequency distribution of key terms derived from the transcribed interview data, illustrating the prominence of recurring concepts related to community identity, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and institutional support.



Figure 2: word count visualization

The research applied purposive sampling to identify the subjects who were engaged in the

conservation and preservation of the intangible heritage actively. There were 20 participants

consisting of community heads, artisans, cultural officers, and youth representatives. This heterogeneous mixture ensured the coverage of different roles, age, extent of involvement, which provided an opportunity to investigate the process of heritage transmission and involvement in a multi-faceted way. The settings of the research were the cultural villages and heritage communities and ICH promotion organizations. The sites offered real contexts of traditions being created, observed, and transmitted and offered the researcher an

opportunity of being in direct contact with material and immaterial aspects of cultural heritage.

This figure 3 illustrates the results of the matrix coding query conducted during thematic analysis, showing the intersections between key themes and participant responses. It highlights the frequency and strength of associations among community identity, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and institutional support in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

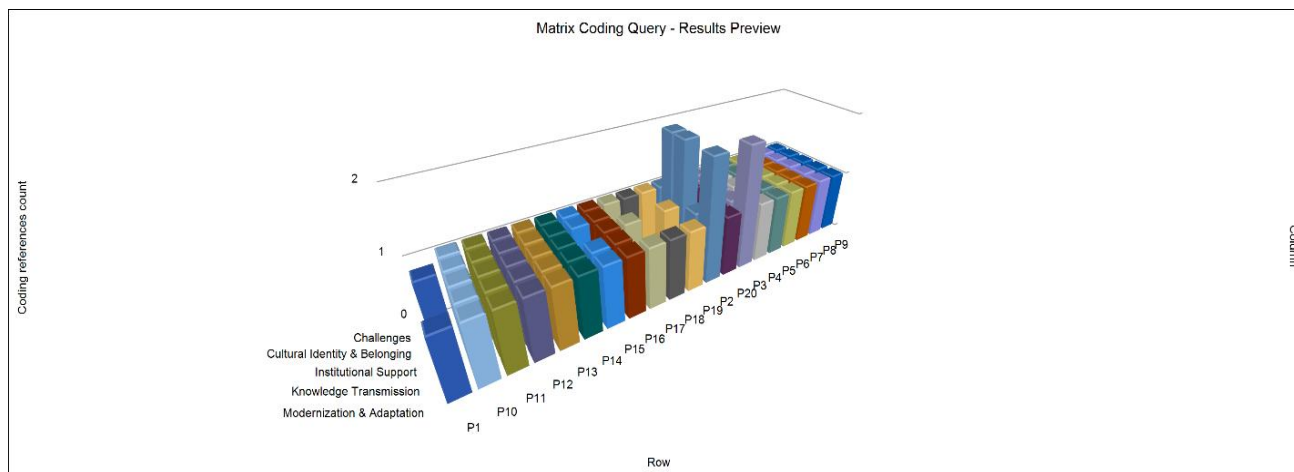


Figure 3: Matrix coding Query

The data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observation of the participants. Individuals were also studied in terms of perceptions and experience as well as motivation by interview and focus groups were also used to help groups to reflect on issues and opportunities in the heritage preservation. The rituals, performance, and interaction in the community also provided some contextual information that was observed which broadened the qualitative analysis. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis, which is a method of coding proposed the theme generation and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Ethical issues, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural

sensitivity, were highly adhered to. On the whole, such a methodological framework enabled a thorough insight into the way the communities understand, experience, and proactively contribute to the maintenance of the intangible cultural traditions and focus on the voices of the people who are directly involved in preserving the heritage.

This figure 4 presents the cluster analysis of coded items, illustrating the relationships and co-occurrences among key themes identified in the data. The visual grouping highlights how concepts such as community identity, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and institutional support are interconnected in preserving intangible cultural heritage.

#### Items clustered by word similarity

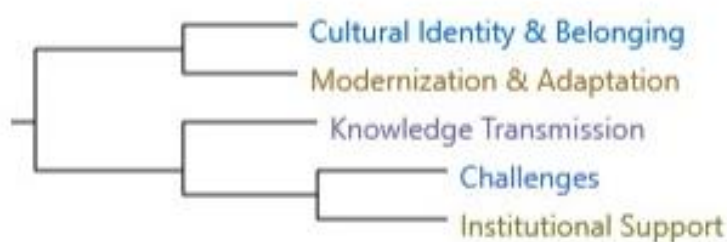


Figure 4: Items Clusters by words



Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the 20 participants, including their roles, educational background, and years of involvement in cultural heritage activities. It provides an overview of the

diversity among community leaders, artisans, cultural officers, educators, and youth representatives who contributed to the study.

**Table 2: Demographic Profile of Participants**

Participant	Gender	Age	Selected Group
P1	Male	22	Youth Representative
P2	Female	20	Youth Representative
P3	Male	35	Artisan/Practitioner
P4	Female	28	Artisan/Practitioner
P5	Male	50	Community Leader
P6	Female	45	Community Leader
P7	Male	55	Elder / Cultural Custodian
P8	Female	52	Elder / Cultural Custodian
P9	Male	30	Cultural Officer
P10	Female	32	Cultural Officer
P11	Male	27	Youth Representative
P12	Female	25	Youth Representative
P13	Male	40	Artisan/Practitioner
P14	Female	38	Artisan/Practitioner
P15	Male	48	Community Leader
P16	Female	46	Community Leader
P17	Male	60	Elder / Cultural Custodian
P18	Female	58	Elder / Cultural Custodian
P19	Male	33	Cultural Officer
P20	Female	31	Cultural Officer

Information was collected for this study's data collection tool from participants by employing semi-structured interviews. To achieve this, the research team developed a set of general questions aimed at identifying the participants' views on the studying community members perceive, experience, and contribute to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. The questions used in the interviews were developed in a very careful manner to ensure that the participants are in a position to explain more after realizing that the study requires more than the respondents' opinions on the topic but their ideas, opinions and experiences on the given research topic. Before actual interviews, therefore, a pilot study was conducted on a sample of people similar to the study population. The pilot test enabled confirmation of participants' understanding of the interview questions and their suitability. To address this issue, the research team sought the feedback of pilot participants on the clarity and relevance of the used questions, which in turn allowed for modifications and improvements for the purpose of developing high quality questions based on the study's objectives. The semi-structured interviews were then set up separately with each subject participant group. All the interviews were face-to-face or conducted through phone or online video conferencing based on

the participants' convenience. This way, it was possible to achieve active participation and contribution since the interviews for data collection were scheduled on suitable dates with the participants.

## 9. ANALYSIS

To examine the participants' Documenting rituals, performances, or community events, this study designed adopt a systematic and scientific approach in the analysis of the data collected. In such a context, the aim of the analysis was to ascertain patterns, distill key findings, and gain a broad understanding of the effectiveness of review of government reports, heritage project documents, and cultural archives.

## 10. TRANSCRIPTION AND DATA PREPARATION

The first process of data analysis was the transcription of the interview tapes. Ideally, each interview was transcribed to the finest detail that included everything that the participants said and even gestural dialogues. In order to make identification of a participant's comments as genuine as possible, verbatim transcriptions were employed. In line with the study's strictly anonymous design, all the participant identifiers were redacted from the



transcripts and all participants were assigned aliases accordingly. It is worth stressing that the transcripts were properly organized and prepared for further analysis.

Table 3 outlines the process of organizing, transcribing, and preparing interview data for analysis, ensuring accuracy, consistency, and reliability in qualitative interpretation.

*Table 3: Transcription and Data Preparation*

Step	Description
Transcription	Verbatim transcription of the interview recordings, capturing participants' responses and expressions in a textual format.
Removal of Identifying Information	All identifiable information of participants (names, locations, etc.) was removed to ensure confidentiality. Participants were assigned pseudonyms for anonymity.
Organization	Transcripts were carefully organized and labeled to facilitate easy access and retrieval during data analysis.

## 11. CODING AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Evaluating the method of data analysis, it can be stated that it was closely related to the coding process. Therefore, in line with the research questions and objectives, a preliminary rough coding system was developed. The study team again reviewed the tapes and found out areas of data chunk age that was related to major themes. The segments were numbered or given a code in reference to the specific theme or concept of the segment. These types of reliability were intended to finally resolve the questions of the coding's reliability and consistency, namely, inter-coder reliability. Some of the interviews were coded by more than one coder, and discrepancies that arose were managed through coder triangulation. This reflected back procedure

was the tool used to improve on the coding framework as it helped in developing a vast list with all possible codes that helped in capturing the participants' experiences within and without. The research team was also able to use thematic analysis to identify recurrent themes about data that has been coded. The team looked for associations and connections between different codes so as to determine how they related to the research objectives. There are the themes which were built and grouped to the categories that were used for analysis.

Table 4 presents the systematic process of coding and identifying emerging themes from the interview data, highlighting key patterns related to community identity, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and institutional support in preserving intangible cultural heritage.

*Table 4: Coding and Thematic Analysis*

Step	Description
Preliminary Coding	Development of a coding framework based on research questions and objectives. Identifying meaningful segments in the interview data and assigning codes to represent themes or concepts.
Inter-coder Reliability	Ensuring consistency in coding across multiple researchers. A subset of interviews was coded independently by different researchers, and any discrepancies were discussed and resolved to enhance the reliability of the coding process.
Refinement of Codes	Iterative process of refining and improving the coding framework based on discussions and consensus-building among the research team.
Thematic Analysis	Systematic analysis of the coded data to identify recurring themes and patterns. Exploring relationships between different codes and understanding their relevance to the research objectives.
Organization	Organizing themes into meaningful categories for a comprehensive understanding of the data. Providing a basis for interpreting the data and drawing conclusions.

## 12. RESULTS

The critical analysis of the interview data assisted in establishing three central themes that were revealed by the stories of the participants; Extra strand: Curriculum; **Theme 1:** Cultural Identity and Belonging, **Theme 2:** Knowledge Transmission, **Theme 3:** Modernization and Adaptation, **Theme 4:** Institutional Support and **Theme 5:** Challenges. In this part, the themes are discussed in more depth and provide an amalgamation of the deliberate cooperation, helps to provoke the personal

experience and perceptions of the cultural preservation.

### *Theme 1: Cultural Identity & Belonging*

Preservation of intangible cultural heritage is much pegged on the cultural identity and sense of belonging since they dictate the manner in which people within the community interact and conserve their heritage (Puig, 2025). Participants would also emphasize on the sense of pride in their own heritage, how much they feel that their attendance at rituals, festivals and other local crafts unites them as a people

and make them feel appreciated (Schimmelpfennig & Muthukrishna, 2025). Traditional costumes, performing instruments, holy sites, and other symbols are known as local symbols that play a significant part in enhancing belonging (Fontanella Pisa et al., 2025).

According to the community members, these symbols are bodily expressions of shared history and shared values through which visible relationships exist among people, their history, and community histories (Seabra et al., 2025). These are the symbols that are generally utilized as focal points during ceremonies, narration of narratives, and performance in such a way that the individuals involved and the audience can exchange heritage (Tan et al., 2025). Communal rituals such as seasonal festivals, religious ceremonies, life-cycle events, etc. were always reported to be essential to intergenerational engagement and social cohesion (Özsoy et al., 2025).

As outlined by the participants, rituals serve as organized ways of transmitting knowledge, expressing and strengthening social ties. By being actively involved, people feel a part of it, they feel responsible and ongoing, and thus make heritage living (van Wieringen et al., 2025). On the whole, cultural identity and belonging can be considered as incentives and perpetuating power in the preservation of heritage (Šćekić et al., 2025). Pride in the community, identification with the local symbols and communal rituals are all processes that help the participants to establish themselves in their traditions and even negotiate modernity and therefore assure the resilience and continuance of the intangible cultural practices (Lian et al., 2025).

### *Theme 2: Knowledge Transmission*

Transmission of knowledge is a fundamental process that enables maintenance of the intangible cultural heritage and the intergenerational interaction is the key to this process. The participants had emphasized the significance of the elder and young interaction where elders are seen to be a keeper of cultural memory and they help younger members of the group to interpret traditions, values and practices. Oral storytelling became one of the most powerful ways of passing cultural information (Ngo & Ngo, 2025).

The participants referred storytelling as an interactive tool by which myths, history and moral is told and creates an emotional bond between narrative speakers and the audience (Hanbing Wang et al., 2025). The storytelling sessions can be used as forums that bring about discussion, questioning and reflection where the young members can learn the cultural meanings and how to apply them in modern

environments (Lyaka & Ngulube, 2025). Apprenticeship programs formal and informal were also emphasized to be essential to maintain the traditions of technical and performativity (crafts, music, ritual practices) (Hanbing Wang et al., 2025). Mentors provide a practical training that, in addition to practical skills, teaches the younger members of the group the symbolic and social meaning of their work (Al Mansoori et al., 2025).

These organized learning enhances intergenerational relationships and community, and establishes continuity in practices of heritage over time. In general, knowledge transmission is a process of life, which incorporates emotional, social, and educational aspects (Hairuo Wang et al., 2025). Through the focus on the interaction between the elderly and the young generation, oral narration, and apprenticeship, communities are able to preserve intangible cultural practices and traditions in their original, relevant, and viable form, thereby preserving them sustainably (Chagwasha et al., 2025).

### *Theme 3: Modernization & Adaptation*

Modernization has had far reaching effects on the way communities perceive, experience and contribute to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Participants admitted that modernization brings difficulties like the reduction of culture and the migration to the cities, but it leaves chances to become adjusted and renewed (Wu et al., 2025). Technology has had an especially revolutionary effect, whereby through digital channels, communities are able to record, exchange, and educate on customary activities (Chaowu Xie et al., 2025).

To illustrate, the younger respondents talked about the use of social media and online archives to keep songs, rituals and oral histories, transcending the generations and increasing the cultural presence beyond the local context (Chaowu Xie et al., 2025). Urban migration became a challenge and driver of innovation. With the migration of the younger members to cities, physical activities in the traditional practices are reduced (Yang, 2025). However, the rituals and festivals that are practiced by diasporic communities are frequently modified to fit urban locations, as rituals and festivals that serve as some of the identity and nostalgic aspects (Yu et al., 2025). These adaptations are used to preserve the cultural continuity even in the displaced or hybrid environments (Yetti et al., 2025).

The heritage performance and maintenance is influenced by the effects of tourism. The participants said that although the tourism helps them financially

and create awareness, it can also result in commodification and loss of authenticity when the agency of the community is compromised (Ahmed & Shaban, 2025). Nevertheless, community-managed tourism projects were perceived as empowerment when their purpose was to tell genuine stories and when they were locally owned (Albishi, 2025). In these ways, modernization and adaptation is a twofold (though not necessarily mutually exclusive) challenge and creativity process in which communities bargain continuity and change so that intangible heritage becomes dynamic, relevant, and sturdy with the changing global realities (Pohan et al., 2025).

#### **Theme 4: Institutional Support**

The institutional support is very important in enabling communities to maintain and propagate intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The participants always stated that the continuity of local traditions depends upon the long-term state financing and institutional support (Ding et al., 2025). Respondents have remarked that an equal distribution of funds particularly to the rural artisans and local cultural groupings facilitates organizing of workshops, performances, and preservation of cultures that would otherwise be reduced by financial constraints (Qi et al., 2025). Education programs were also found to be important tools of protecting heritage. The incorporation of traditional knowledge, arts and oral histories into formal and informal education systems contributes towards intergenerational learning and rejuvenates cultural pride in the younger generation (Lopez et al., 2025).

The respondents referred to school-based heritage clubs and cultural training opportunities as productive channels to make local traditions more aware and retain the interest. These programs do not only maintain the traditional skills, but also strengthen identity building among the youth (Fontanella Pisa et al., 2025). Also, the heritage festivals were viewed as institutionalized ways through which the community members can be brought together, and their culture is made more visible. The participants appreciated such festivals as an opportunity to celebrate publicly, to be empowered economically, and to exchange cultures (Luthra et al., 2025). They however emphasized authentic community participation too in order to avoid over-commercialization. In general,

community agency, social cohesion, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage as a living and developing phenomenon are contributed to by institutional support in the form of financial aid, education, and regular festivals (Zheng et al., 2025).

#### **Theme 5: Challenges**

Although many communities have been keen on the long-term preservation of intangible cultural heritage the respondents' established long-term challenges that have endangered the sustainability of the same. Youth disinterest was one of the most urgent problems that were discussed (Hytman et al., 2025). Blistering modernization and the exposure of the young generation to international cultural aspects have made the young generations see the traditional means as being old-fashioned or irrelevant (Ide, 2025). There was a general concern among the participants that unless the youths become involved, there will be a serious problem of the young people losing continuity of rituals, oral traditions and craftsmanship (Jiang et al., 2025). Research has demonstrated that by resettling the youth with education, creative media and digital heritage project, cultural pride and engagement can be rekindled (Li, 2025). Another significant issue that arose was the loss of authenticity. It was reported that cultural meanings may be eroded when tradition is translated to the tourism or commercial presentation (Li et al., 2025). This commodification is about to turn living heritage into performance based products without context and communal meaning. The issue of adaptation and authenticity is a thorny issue to most heritage communities (Lian et al., 2025).

In addition, economic forces were reported to have an effect on cultural practices. To a large number of artisans and practitioners, monetary consideration usually supersedes the desire to pursue the time-honored traditional craft or ritual. Lack of funding and unreliable sources of income make the situation even worse (Pai et al., 2025). Participants emphasized the ideas that the supportive policies regarding sustainable livelihoods and inclusion interventions are essential to maintaining the heritage in a meaningful way (Luo et al., 2025). All in all, these issues emphasize the necessity to enhance the involvement of the young generation, safeguard authenticity, and economic empowerment to secure the perpetuation of intangible cultural practices (Schimmelpfennig & Muthukrishna, 2025).

**Table 5: Themes**

Theme 1: Cultural Identity & Belonging
Theme 2: Knowledge Transmission
Theme 3: Modernization & Adaptation
Theme 4: Institutional Support
Theme 5: Challenges

### 13. DISCUSSION

#### 13.1. *Interpretation of Finding*

This paper has discovered that community participation in the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage is inextricably linked with communal identity, emotional involvement as well as social responsibility. The participants' stories bring out the fact that heritage preservation is not a conservation practice, but a daily living practice where people perform their sense of belonging and continuation of culture (Houweling & Grünberger, 2024). Pride that individuals have in sharing communal rites as well as being representatives of local symbols strengthens the social glue and forms an emotional network that binds people even more (Morales & Burnett-Zeigler, 2025). The assertions of identity indicate that culture preservation thrives when individuals believe that their culture is an element of the individual and interpersonal significance (Aldegheishem, 2023).

The interaction between the generations was very significant as a process of preserving the traditional knowledge systems. The elders are the cultural stabilizers since they impart skills and values to the youngsters through narration, mentoring and apprenticeship (Özsoy et al., 2025). Modernization though has proved a challenge to the youth engagement, but it is paramount in ensuring that the tradition will survive in the future (Pai et al., 2025). When mentorship systems and creative learning curriculums are operational in communities, communities become more resistant to continuity Adaptation (Albishi, 2025). This highlights the situation that information transmission about culture does not only need access to the information, but the quality of relationships where the information can be passed across (Michael et al., 2023). Modern influences give a challenge and opportunities such as technology and migration. Electronic platforms have become handy in terms of capturing and revitalizing heritage practices to expand access and exposure (Özsoy et al., 2025). Migration, however, erases the practice-based traditional environments, and one adapts to a new social environment. Tourism brings about those same dualities: it offers cultural gains and social awareness but poses threats to the transformation of cultural meaning in case it is subject to the influence of the commercial interests but not community narratives (Gholipour et al., 2023).

An institutional cooperation became a determining force. On the other hand, authenticity and local agency are usually undermined through limited funding and top-down interventions (Poplawska,

2025). The chronic dilemmas, especially youth disengagement, commodification as well as economic pressure manifest structural vulnerability that jeopardizes the sustainability of ICH (Puig, 2025). However, the participants are flexible and creative, as they consider the heritage in the field of education, media, and creative business to remain relevant (Park & Park, 2023).

On the whole, the analysis shows that continuity and change are the two aspects, which need to be balanced to preserve intangible traditions. Heritage does not survive by being fixed and replicated but rather by being engaged, intergenerational and situational (Schimmelpfennig & Muthukrishna, 2025). This paper highlights the importance of focusing on the voices of a community, as cultural resilience starts at the grassroots level, through the lens of collective responsibility, the power of collective memory, and the agency of creativity (Hiswara et al., 2023).

Furthermore, one can mention that the aspects of modernization and adaptation are in fact a two-sided process that challenges and, simultaneously, reinstates cultural continuity. Even though, globalization, migration and technological advancement are demolishing the traditional contexts, it is providing new grounds of innovation and proliferation (Seabra et al., 2025). Similarly, the community-ownership and authenticity can help heritage preservation to be improved through tourism and modernization. It was observed that the notion of institutional support was a highly significant mediator of heritage sustainability (Tan et al., 2025). Government actions, educational campaigns and heritage festivals make communities be leaders to maintain their traditions when developed in collaboration with local actors and allow inclusivity (van Wieringen et al., 2025). However, local control may be compromised by vertical approaches and untrustworthy finance and this is where the participatory policy models are required that would offer the balance between the formal level support and the local autonomy.

### 14. COMPARISON WITH LITERATURE

This study findings are consistent with and relevant to available literature that underscores the importance of community involvement in the Mama keeping of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). As Participant 1 (Community Leader) reflected, "Our traditions are not relics; they breathe through us every day." In line with expressions of cultural pride and belonging by the participants indicate that heritage preservation is a living process that

strengthens identity and social unity (Zhang et al., 2024). In this regard, Participant 6 (Artisan-Performer) noted, "When we perform the old songs, people feel connected—it's like stitching our hearts together." Similarly, Participant 3 (Cultural Officer) observed, "Policies can promote heritage, but emotions sustain it." The evidence of the study that local symbols and rituals enhance social ties relates to the point of shared cultural imagination as the foundation of group belonging (F. Wang et al., 2025). On the same note, the stories of the participants also align with the argument who asserts that it is the emotional investment and not just institutional policy that results in the continued existence of a culture (Schimmelpfennig & Muthukrishna, 2025).

The findings also uphold the views that intergenerational transmission is the foundation of ICH continuity. As Participant 12 (Youth Representative) expressed, "Listening to our elders is like opening a living library." Mentorship, storytelling, and apprenticeship were characterized as indispensable by the participants, which is in line with the results who found the practices to promote cultural learning as well as identity formation (Hanbing Wang et al., 2025). Participant 11 (Minority Community Leader) stated, "When we teach the young, we also remember ourselves." Nevertheless, this work presents the discussion further with the emotional reciprocity of the elder and the youth showing that intergenerational exchange is not only pedagogical but also a relational and identity-affirming experience (Deng et al., 2023).

The findings are in the recognition of modernization as a two-sided force. Traditions are challenged and renewed by technology, migration, and tourism at the same time. As Participant 18 (Folk Storyteller) explained, "The mobile phone can record my story but it can also make the children forget to listen." The digital tools used to document rituals compare with the work of regarding digital heritage innovation and the issue of commodification supports the argument offered regarding the loss of authenticity as caused by tourism (Hairuo Wang et al., 2025). Participant 20 (Youth Digital Activist) asserted, "We remix old traditions for new audiences online it's still our voice, just louder." However, the descriptions of the participants show agency, communities are creative adapters of traditions, without losing symbolic value completely, which points towards the more optimistic perspective than some of the previous literature (Anthony, 2023).

The power of institutions and policies that have been identified in this study supports the participatory preservation can be created through

inclusive governance. As Participant 7 (NGO Cultural Officer) noted, "When communities are part of the planning, heritage becomes a shared success." Similarly, Participant 15 (Village Council Leader) stated, "Policies written with us last longer than those written for us." Education programs and heritage festivals were appreciated by the participants in cases where the development was done in partnership) on the issue of community empowerment through common decisions (Wu et al., 2025). Participant 14 (Weaver Artisan) remarked, "We attend meetings, but our voices end up lost in paperwork." Yet, this paper finds that there is an unresolved discrepancy between policy purpose and action, whereby bureaucratic procedures restrict the input of the grassroots level— an issue that had not been previously thoroughly studied in literature (Houweling & Grünberger, 2024).

Lastly, the issues of disengagement of youth and economic pressure confirm trends noted but current results demonstrate resilience in the form of adaptation within communities. Participant 16 (Youth Activist) explained, "We don't reject our culture—we reshape it so it speaks our language." Participants showed creativity in negotiating with change instead of passivity (Chaowu Xie et al., 2025). Therefore, in addition to supporting much of the prevailing literature, this research provides an added insight into the nature of emotional attachment, coping mechanisms, and local agency, aspects which redesign the nature of living, meaning making, and change among communities in a contemporary world (Zhang et al., 2024).

Despite all these strengths, the research observes that there remain certain challenges like decline of youth participation, financial limitations and cultural commodification. Participant 10 (Dance Instructor) lamented, "We want to teach, but without support, even passion fades." Yet, participants collectively portrayed adaptation rather than decline. Participant 2 (Craft Artisan) concluded, "Our culture doesn't die it transforms." Nevertheless, rather than the image of decay, the outcomes introduce the image of adaptation and survival (Chaowu Xie et al., 2025). As Participant 1 (Community Leader) summarized, "Heritage survives when it walks with the people, not behind them." The societies continue to find new ways of integrating the traditional knowledge into the modern life to demonstrate that heritage will still be dominant throughout the changes rather than preservation (Yang, 2025).

In conclusion, this study has emphasized the need to make sure that the conservation of the intangible cultural heritage thrives at community level whereby

communities are considered as active players rather than passive recipients. The assumption of cultural resilience is true interaction, multigenerational cohesion, and creative reactivity. To ensure that the living traditions are alive and well, the heritage preservation must never be taken too far, which is through the means of the inclusive cooperation, and which should be aligned to the evolving reality of the modern society.

## 15. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

Although the current study can be seen as offering valuable information on the ways communities perceive, experience, and contribute to the maintenance of intangible cultural heritage a number of limitations cannot be ignored. To start with, the study had a qualitative and contextual design with a relatively small sample size of participants selected in the sample of cultural villages and heritage organizations. Even though this method enabled the use of depth and context richness, it can restrict the possibility to generalize the results to a larger population or different cultural contexts. Further studies should also take into account the broader scope in terms of the geography to cover various regions or cultural settings, and they will be able to compare the results of various communities and traditions.

Second, the use of self-reported information in the form of interviews and focus group discussions can have brought about a component of subjectivity or social desirability bias. The respondents could have depicted their cultures in better perspectives or minimized internal community disputes. Further study of these issues would be beneficial so that future researchers can be able to confirm this by using triangulation techniques: combining archival research, long-term ethnographic observation, or digital ethnography.

Third, the research focused mainly on the views of the community leaders, artisans, elders, and the representatives of the youth. Although these groups provide important perspectives, the other voices of the marginalized groups such as females in restricted cultural positions, poorer artisans, or an underrepresented subgroup within the communities were underrepresented. Inclusion sampling methods should be used in future research to enable the hearing of various social, gender, and generational views that will help to deepen the knowledge of intra-community processes and cultural negotiation mechanisms.

The other weakness is the temporal nature of cultural practices. Intangible heritage is dynamic and

a cross-sectional study merely gives a picture of prevailing realities. Longitudinal research following the change of culture within a number of years would be able to give a better understanding of the manner in which adaptation, transmission, and participation change with the change in generation, migration or with technological improvements.

Further, the research was much community-based with minimal interaction with policymakers, educators, or tourism stakeholders who indirectly influence the results of preservation. The future studies must reflect on the multi-stakeholders approaches which means combining the institutional, governmental and corporate approach to analyze the interaction between external forces and the community agency. The combination of these linkages is something to understand in order to create more balanced and sustainable policy.

Finally, although this study addressed the concept of modernization and technology as an adaptation mechanism, it did not address the digital preservation ecosystems that have been formed in recent years in their entirety. The future research might focus on the role of social media and virtual reality, as well as artificial intelligence in the context of cultural documentation, education, and heritage entrepreneurship, specifically among younger generations.

Comprehensively, the future of the research should be more interdisciplinary and participatory with the implementation of ethnography, digital humanities, and policy analysis to complement the revelations related to the preservation of ICH. The enhancement of theoretical and practical contribution will be achieved through the expansion of the comparative spectrum and incorporation of inclusiveness and exploration of technological innovations. The future researchers can overcome these limitations and further expand the existing research in order to develop more robust community-oriented models of safeguarding intangible heritage to make sure that traditions remain alive, dynamic, and meaningful interpretations of cultural identity in the global context.

## 16. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to look at the perception and experience and contribution of the community members in the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage with a focus on the role of the community voices in ensuring continuation of living traditions. These findings promote the notion that cultural preservation is a social process which is guided by identity, emotion and involvement of the

masses rather than institutionalized and inflexible conservation process. The study by way of a qualitative discourse of community narratives came up with a complex procedure of how pride, belonging, and mutual accountability strengthen cultural practices that occur between generations. Among the main results of the research it is found that cultural identity and sense of belonging is the affective core of heritage conservation. The pride will contribute to the strengthening of social identification and make people more eager to preserve the traditions against external influences and new requirements. One more dimension that is raised by the study is the intergenerational transmission as dynamic and relational process in which knowledge,

values and skills are transferred. The role of the elder, a carrier of culture and the young, a creative-inheritor is complementary to the sustainability of the culture life. They can be transmitted through storytelling, mentorship, and apprenticeship and as such, both the practical means and the ineffable meaning will serve to keep the heritage relevant and vibrant under new circumstances.

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