

When Scars Become Art: Rebirthing the Historical Ashes as Tourism Asset of Davao De Oro through *Indayog Sa Kahimunan* Festival among Laak National High School Grand Champion Performers

Dave Florenz Paul J. Santos^{1*} and Jayson Q. Alas^{1,2}

¹City of Mati, Province of Davao Oriental, Philippines

*santosdavefp@gmail.com, ²jayson.alas002@deped.gov.ph

Date Submitted:

August 23, 2026

Date Accepted:

September 11, 2026

Date Published:

October 16, 2026

DOI:

10.5281/zenodo.2341582

ABSTRACT

The engagement of youth creative teams in municipal cultural festivals serves as a vital mechanism for communities to articulate their collective identity, safeguard intangible heritage, and advance local destination branding. Accordingly, the student performers of the SalinLahi Performing Arts Guild from Laak National High School represented the province of Davao de Oro and secured the grand championship in the Indayog sa Kadalanan during the Kahimunan Festival. Grounded in a descriptive phenomenological framework, this study investigated the lived experiences, creative methodologies, cultural representations, and perceived tourism contributions of the student performers as they translated historical adversity into a competitive performing art. Utilizing purposive sampling, ten student-performers who directly participated in the winning

contingent were selected, and data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews analyzed via reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the participants' narratives were encapsulated across several core domains: conceptualizing local historical struggles—such as natural disasters, socio-environmental disruptions, and community tragedies—through "Echoes of the Past," executing narrative progression via "Symbolic Choreography," and maintaining ethical standards through "Reverential Portrayal". Furthermore, the students navigated rigorous physiological and psychological demands alongside resource constraints by embodying the core Filipino value of "Bayanihan". Winning the grand championship profoundly altered their self-perception, cultivating a strengthened cultural identity wherein they embraced their roles as active "Stewards of Culture" who recognized that "A Story Told is a Win". Moreover, the performers evaluated their championship showcase as a catalyst that enhanced Laak's tourism appeal and presented the Kahimunan Festival in a renewed light as a platform for meaningful narrative expression. Ultimately, the study underscores that the journey from historical trauma to a recognized tourism asset is a multifaceted endeavor requiring institutional support, rigorous cultural archiving, historical research, youth empowerment, and sustainable tourism monitoring.

Keywords: *Phenomenological Study, Grand Champion Performers, Historical Scars, Creative Tourism, Indayog sa Kadalanan, Kahimunan Festival, Laak National High School, Davao de Oro, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Given the intangibility of the historical trauma, the socio-environmental crises, and communal adversity, post-disaster community revival and tourism development poses a major challenge. Cultural performances can create symbolic spaces for communities to rebuild identity and socio-economic rebirth, especially when there are significant socio-historical disruptions (Rossetti & Quinn, 2021). Traditional performing arts are now being seen as powerful tools that can be used as a strategic mechanism to promote social cohesion and economic sustainability in modern-day Destination Development (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023). The socio-historical "scars" are however, more complex to transform into tourism products, and must balance the protection of authentic cultural heritage with the production of commercial festivals—especially when the transformation is led by youth performers in the rural municipalities.

At the international level, rehabilitation of living heritage in post-crisis situations is convergent with international conventions, such as United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11.4, which calls for the protection of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to ensure the resilience of communities (UN-Habitat, 2023). The globe has shown how destinations use intangible cultural experiences and festival tourism to enhance the sense of attachment to the destination, empower local residents, and create transformative 'experiencescapes' (Chen et al., 2020; Eluwole et al., 2022; Yan et al., 2024). In different global locations, cultural exhibitions are set up as a formalized event in which history is reenacted to draw visitors and create socio-economic capital. However, international academics stress a need to uplift communities and to prevent diluting sacred communal heritage in order for festival tourism to be sustainable in the long-term.

The Philippines has established legislations to promote festival tourism and the conservation of intangible cultural heritage, such as Republic Act No. 10066 (2010) and Republic Act No. 11961 (2023), which focus on cultural mapping and the retention of ICs as a means to local development (National Commission for Culture and the Arts [NCCA], 2025). In the Philippines, cultural festivals are important tools for building civic identity, dark-cultural tourism, and youth participation in the preservation of heritage in Philippine municipalities (Besmonte, 2022; Pastera, 2024; Wight & Victoria, 2022). The management and structure of local government unit (LGU)-led festivals, however, often have unique characteristics that impact the presentation of heritage narratives on stage (Mesana et al., 2025). In the region, competitions like Indayog sa Kadalanan are usually conducted by the youth to portray the stories of survival and success in the communities, but most of the studies on such competitions focus on the impact of the increased number of tourists who visit a community.

In Mindanao and Davao Region (Region XI), cultural heritage is layered with the legacy of strong Indigenous culture as well as experiences of ecological exposure, farming difficulties, and socio-political tensions. Harmonious relationships between modernization, cultural erosion, and heritage resilience are complex issues for indigenous groups, like the Dibabawon, and authentic performance preservation is crucial for the region (Ente, 2025). To drive regional stability and economic growth, local governments actively promote the connection of tourism to sustainable green investments and use cultural festivals to reframe the province's image from one of mining crises and conflict to one of peace, security, and eco-cultural tourism (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples [NCIP], 2023; Province of Davao de Oro, 2023). Cultural performance is a key medium that cultural teams use to transform a struggle from the past into a tourism asset throughout the region (Santos et al., 2026).

On the municipal level, the town of Laak in Davao de Oro is home to the Kahimunan Festival, a traditional celebration that marks giving thanks, unity and heritage (NCIP, 2023; Province of Davao de Oro, 2023). One of the prominent features of this celebration is the Indayog sa Kadalanan and the theatrical performance exhibition which is led by the Grand Champion Performers of Laak National High School. The student performers are first culture bearers, embodying in competitive choreography the historical struggles and environmental resilience of Laak, as well as their social renaissance. Although they play a key role in winning regional awards and elevating their city's pride in tourism, there is little empirical analysis of their performance and translation of their city's "ashes" into competition and commodity level performing art in the Kahimunan Festival.

Although the mapping of ICH, managerial structures, and ritualized tourist experiences are discussed in existing literature, the Practical-Knowledge Gap and Empirical Gap have not been addressed. In terms of methodology, the existing studies focus on the tourists' or organizers' or creative adult director's viewpoints on festival tourism, while not considering the viewpoint of high school students who are actors and present the festival, specifically as performers. Additionally, there is a Contextual Gap in how the youth in historically vulnerable rural municipalities (Laak, Davao de Oro) envision the change from the trauma of conflict and disasters to an active tourism resource, specifically through competitive *Indayog sa Kadalanan* performances.

This qualitative study investigates the experiences, interpretations, and operationalization of historical adversity as a viable tourism asset in the case of the Kahimunan Festival as experienced by the Laak National High School Grand Champion Performers, with the aim of addressing these empirical, population and practical-knowledge gaps. Drawing on the concepts of living heritage development and intangible cultural heritage protection, this work offers a qualitative analysis to better understand the relationship between youth performing arts, post-disaster community re-branding and rural cultural tourism. Finally, the results will provide a basis for local government institutions, teachers and tourism planners to develop sustainable, ethically driven local festival tourism development systems that will increase the role of young performers and safeguard the 'soul' of the community.

Research Questions

The main thrust of this study was to rebirth the historical ashes as tourism asset of Davao de Oro through *Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival* among Laak National High School grand champion performers.

Specifically, this sought answers to the following research questions:

1. How do the current Laak National High School grand champion performers conceptualize and physically portray the historical struggles, socio-environmental disasters, and community "scars" of Davao de Oro through their winning performance in *Indayog sa Kadalanan*?
2. What are the lived experiences, physical hardships, and personal sacrifices endured by the current student performers during their intensive preparation for the *Kahimunan Festival*?
3. In what ways did winning the grand championship alter the student performers' self-perception and personal valuation of their community's historical identity and cultural heritage?
4. How do the current student performers evaluate the impact of their championship *Indayog sa Kadalanan* performance in elevating the *Kahimunan Festival* and establishing Laak as a viable cultural tourism destination in Davao de Oro?
5. What strategic recommendations and insights can the current grand champion performers offer to cultural managers, school directors, and municipal tourism planners to nurture youth talent and preserve living heritage?

Theoretical Lens

This research is grounded in theories of collective trauma and cultural expression which have been developed in the field of cultural and dark tourism in relation to the transformative process of converting trauma and culture into symbolic and economic assets for community renewal. The study is based on two complementary and highly tested theoretical frameworks, the Forms of Capital Theory (Bourdieu 1986) and the Dark Tourism Framework (Foley and Lennon 1996) and further conceptualization of Stone (2006)). These theories form a coherent framework for understanding the enactment, reframing, and expression of the historical plight in the context of useful tourism products by student-performers in the Kahimunan Festival.

Forms of Capital Theory

According to the Forms of Capital Theory, power, status and economic value are created and produced by non-monetary assets, which are in three forms: embodied (long lasting dispositions of the mind and body);

objectified (cultural goods or works of art); and institutionalized (academic or competitive recognition) (Bourdieu, 1986). The theory of Bourdieu provides a basis for the understanding of acquiring, internalizing and using skills of artistic heritage for high school performers in the context of this study. During the celebration of Indayog sa Kadalanan, the Laak National High School dancers display the physical discipline, choreographic ability and emotional expression as an expression of their embodied cultural capital. The great Champion and regional awards won by the group is the institutionalized cultural capital, a form of validation for the community's art prestige. Analytical tools are available to theorize the process by which raw, localized history is repackaged by performers to create structured symbolic capital that strengthens local identity and local tourism economy: those of Bourdieu (1986).

Dark Tourism Framework

The Dark Tourism Framework is a model that sees sites, events and performances perceived as suffering, tragedy and socio-environmental disasters, which are presented in such a way as to make them attractive and consumed by visitors (Foley & Lennon, 1996; Stone, 2006). This framework is the basis for the narrative and thematic dimension of this study, as it brings out the ethical reframing of the historical "ashes" or collective trauma in the form of compelling tourism offers within a dark-to-light continuum. Artistic depictions of past crises do not exploit tragedy, but rather offer means of commemorating history, emotional catharsis and community rebirth (Stone, 2006). Indeed, modern tourist experiences have become increasingly motivated by the need for "survival" and "historical memory" according to Foley and Lennon (1996). Hence, the Dark Tourism Framework provides a conceptual perspective on how the Kahimunan Festival becomes a transformational moment in which historical wounds are reimagined as learning, healing, and artistic performances for visitors.

Synthesis

The Forms of Capital Theory and the Dark Tourism Framework together form a system for considering the re-imagining of historical misfortune as a regional tourism product. Bourdieu (1986) outlines acquisition and operationalization of individual and collective heritage skills as embodied and institutionalized cultural capital, while Foley and Lennon (1996) and Stone (2006) discuss the ethically constructed nature of viable tourism products as narratives of tragic historical events. Theories are the basis for the study and it presupposes that the student-performers are rendering localized narratives of endurance through competitive performances, which they also actively translate into symbolic and economic capital for Davao de Oro. This theoretical framework can be used to qualitatively examine the lived experiences, expressions of this performance and socio-cultural contributions of the Laak National High School Grand Champion Performers.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing and Physically Portraying Historical Struggles, Socio-Environmental Disasters, and Community Scars through Festival Street Dance

The scholarship in the academic field of performance studies, semiotics, dark tourism, and community development after disaster suggest that performing arts can be dynamic tools to convert collective traumas and historical catastrophes to socio-economic and cultural resources. Community-based Street dance allows street performers to confront the scars of the past and the forces of nature in a symbolic form of resilience and identity through the use of embodied movement, choreographic signifiers and narrative staging. These approaches are then applied to Davao de Oro and the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival, and found in the literature to be how student-performers, local institutions and cultural creators can re-imagine environmental crises in aesthetic forms that catalyze community recovery and cultural preservation.

Theoretically, the latter have been shown in recent empirical works to be key factors for post-disaster stability and heritage preservation, namely local adaptation, semiotic coding and youth-led performance frameworks. The community's resiliency in Monkayo, Davao de Oro, which is marked by the support of its institutions and its resourcefulness, is key in helping to turn environmental disruptions into economic and civic recoveries, according to Aparecio and Torrejas (2024). At the same time, Amoroso and Atole (2024) conducted a semiotic analysis of the Philippine Street dance and found that the body, props, and stage acts as a visual language in which the feeling of struggle and power imbalance from the past and the collapse of the environment are manifested. Building on this sociocultural process, Artazo et al. (2024) and Castro (2026) found that street dance and performance spaces originating in communities and supported by schools enable emotional healing, the transmission of intergenerational knowledge, and historical memory, wherein young dancers physically become the embodiment of the community's endurance. Furthermore, Fabros et al. (2023) noted that the frameworks of dark tourism turn tragedy into learning opportunities and Ling (2025) pointed out that the dance of the street is a modern form of using athleticism and creativity to create a new connection between traditional heritage and youth expression.

While these impressive empirical findings provide important contributions to the literature, there is a notable lack of research on the subjective construction, experience and embodiment of localized historical trauma and disaster "scars" by the adolescent performative/performing self in relation to making a winning performance that becomes a tourism asset. Past studies have focused on post-disaster economic recovery, structural event management or textual semiotic analyses from a spectator's or organizer's perspective, with the lived and phenomenological experiences and embodied agency of the high school performer largely under-investigated. To fill this empirical, theoretical and contextual deficit, the present study examines the conceptualization and embodiment of Davao de Oro's struggles in history and socio-environmental disasters by grand champions performers of the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival at Laak National High School, thereby showcasing how embodied youth performances transformed the historical "ashes" into a celebrated cultural tourism asset.

Lived Experiences, Physical Hardships, and Personal Sacrifices Endured by Student Performers During Intensive Festival Preparation

Dance psychology, sports biomechanics and festival studies scholars argue that the intense cultural performance depends on intricate balancing acts between various elements of physical condition, emotional control and institutional demands. These discourses see artistic achievement as not just a result of artistic ability, but also as a form of physical stress and deprivation, time poverty and psychological strain imposed upon the adolescent street dancer. In school-based cultural exhibitions, the ethical questions regarding whether the school's engagement in the festival is justified, or whether the personal cost (of participation) and physical effects (sacrifice) outweigh the benefits (e.g., building up the reputation of the school and promoting cultural tourism) of the institution have become the focal point of debate.

Empirical research in the last few years has regularly shown the high physical and socio-academic demands that are faced by adolescent and competitive performers while in preparation. Santos et al. (2026) reported that the important stage of creative teams and dancers who want to succeed in the major street dancing competition such as the Indak-Indak sa Kadayawan Festival involves psychological pressure, scarcity of resources, and fatigue from rehearsing late at night. Likewise, by using the concept of *mugna* (creative embodiment) the writer highlighted in the context of preparation for municipal festivals, how it requires a great sacrifice of the body and space and how it reconfigures the daily routine of the dancers so that they can embody the heritage of their community. The tension between these rehearsal needs means there are significant time management issues faced by student-dancers (Lumaad et al. 2026), with student-dancers reporting higher levels of stress, academic tension and chronic fatigue as a result of chronic time poverty. Nam et al. (2024) noted from psychological and biomechanical viewpoints that the degree of cognitive strain and discomfort in the body during the pre-stage is a continuous and constant process required to achieve technical movement automation, and

Pavlović et al. (2022) revealed from their practical studies that too many hours of training and too many repeated trainings moves directly increase the risk of muscle fatigue, joint strain and overuse injuries.

While there are significant physiological risks, academic stress and organizational pressures associated with competitive dance that have been well documented, there is less research that investigates how the stress of competitive dance is subjectively negotiated, negotiated, and subsequently personally meaning made within qualitative phenomenological contexts for high school dancers in rural municipalities or post-disaster municipalities. Past research primarily focuses on the issues of time management, bio-mechanical risks of injury, or creative production logistics, and rarely addresses the lived experience of student-athletes acting out narratives of historical trauma and community disaster. This empirical and contextual gap is addressed in the present study as it aims to provide a deeper insight into the lived experiences, physical hardship and personal sacrifice of the grand champion performers of Laak National High School that took place during the intensive preparation for the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival in Davao de Oro, and the human toll of such cultural tourism assets.

Alteration of Student Performers' Self-Perception and Personal Valuation of Community Historical Identity and Cultural Heritage Through Festival Success

Sociocultural and psychological scholarship argues that competitive success in public cultural contexts serves as a potent means to construct identity, bolster self-efficacy and place attachment. Festival street dance is not just about theatrical performance but is an opportunity to bring young people from the role of participants in history to become active protectors and narrators of local history, by achieving peak performance in regional showcases. In the context of youth development and heritage studies, the question of whether winning at festivals and festivals competitions represents a true and enduring expression of cultural stewardship by the youth or whether it serves as little more than a fleeting self-esteem boost based on institutional recognition and heritage tourism consumption is central.

There is a growing body of empirical research showing that both successful competition in the arts and genuine cultural involvement have a profound effect on the self-concept and valuing of heritage of performers. Santos et al. (2026) found that winning the grand prize in a major street-dance competition can make the physical exertion, or lack thereof, and limited resources of rehearsal "grapples" into a lifelong memory of personal fulfillment and community pride. Likewise, Lobo (2024) found that the active immersion of Philippine traditional dance steps, music and history in the education of the students gave them a strong sense of cultural ownership to their traditional dances making them see it as a valuable identity asset that they want to protect as opposed to mere academic knowledge. Good et al. (2020) showed that learning traditional performing arts builds young people's self-esteem and cultural identity, helping them to become confident cultural ambassadors in the school and community context. Additionally, Nguyen Thanh and Phanlukthao (2026) found that public street festivals help to transmit intangible cultural heritage by raising young people's perceived social status of being vital parts of community identity; while the work of Lin and Lee (2020), Lee and Jan (2022), Quadros et al. (2024), Wood and Homolja (2021), and Kuo et al. (2020) collectively verified that authentic participation and shared success during festivals creates strong sense of place identity, local pride, and strategic youth solidarities.

Existing scholarship demonstrates a broad range of impacts of festival participation in self-identification, tourist appeal and overall appreciation of culture, but little empirical research has focused on the effects of winning a grand prize on the self-identification and subjectivity of the historical struggles or "scars" of their community. The study of place attachment generally focuses on the audience's point of view or analyzes the issue of youth identity in general culture programs, so that the psychological impact of success in the championship experienced by student-dancers from historically disadvantaged regions is still relatively under-researched. In response to this gap in the empirical, theoretical and contextual, this study examines the impact of the grand champion of Laak National High School during the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival on their perception of themselves and their own value of Davao de Oro's historical identity and cultural heritage.

Student Performers' Evaluation of Their Championship Performance in Elevating the Kahimunan Festival and Establishing Laak as a Viable Cultural Tourism Destination in Davao de Oro

Competitive cultural events are seen as important tools for spatial repositioning, destination branding and for municipal economic development by cultural geography and destination marketing scholarship. The eye towards the street as an arena for localized civic entertainment is complemented by the view of artistic excellence and high-impact cultural performances as strategic catalysts that boost the prestige of the festival, advance real images of heritage and make host municipalities attractive tourism destinations. In cultural tourism research, the question is whether regional festival competitions can really provide sustainable tourism development and long-term rebranding of peripheral or disaster-affected municipalities, or if they can only do so in the short term in the period they are in operation.

Empirical studies have been conducted in recent years that support this argument to a great extent in terms of the structural potential of festival showcases to change the image of a destination and promote regional tourism. Finkel and Platt (2020) have illustrated that cultural festivals are spatial interventions that enable the city to redefine local narratives; they reinforce creative resilience and re-imagine a marginalized or disaster-affected space as a vibrant focus of cultural activities. Focusing on strategic performance improvements directly influences the competitive image of a municipality, which leads to local pride and tourist interest in the area, as Limjuico et al. (2022) found in festival rebranding contexts. Visitor experience and branding issues have led Richards and King (2022) to conclude that the artistic quality and emotional impact of a live festival performance directly impact on audience engagement and festival prestige, and that Xu (2024) found that articulating true heritage stories is a powerful way to enhance the destination's brand and authenticity appeal to tourists. Moreover, Leal Londoño et al. (2022) demonstrated that special events in the festival provide sustainable emotional links between spectators and the destinations, strengthening host places in regional travel maps.

While scholarly literature is rich in documentation of festivals' effects on the tourist perceptions and destination image formation and the marketing of festivals by event organizers and tourism planners, few studies have focused on the subjective evaluation of the festivals' contribution to destination building from the perspective of the festivals' artists. Prior research has largely focused on quantitative surveys of visitors to the city or on review of policy documentation at the macro level, with the reflective evaluations and critical analysis of the city's champion student-dancers—the people who embodied the city's culture and heritage on stage—remaining largely unstudied. To close this empirical, theoretical and contextual gap, the present study examines the subjective perception of the grand champion performers of the impact of their winning performance in raising the level of the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival and making Laak a promising cultural tourism destination of Davao de Oro.

Strategic Recommendations and Insights offered by Grand Champion Performers to Cultural Managers, School Directors, and Municipal Tourism Planners to Nurture Youth Talent and Preserve Living Heritage

The sustainable transmission of ICH requires participatory governance, co-design frameworks and institutional synchronization, which are themes that are proposed by the contemporary scholarship in heritage management and youth studies. This view challenges a conception of youth performers as mere executants of festival choreography, and suggests that adolescent dancers should be considered key stakeholders, co-creators, and strategic advisors in cultural policy and in the way a festival is organized. In the sphere of festival governance and educational management, there is discussion regarding the effectiveness of institutional structures and frameworks in enabling youth agency and safeguarding the well-being of performers, and whether planning is primarily top-down, led by administrative concerns and commercial tourism demands without considering the perspectives of performers.

Empirical research in recent years has pointed to multi-dimensional approaches to empowering youth, integration of policies, and to cultural archiving. The study by Zhang et al. (2024) concluded that models involving participation, incorporating young people's perspectives in strategic decision making, are important to ensure long-term civic engagement and creative ownership for sustainable heritage transmission. In the realm of educational and creative practice, Cesário (2025) and Qin et al. (2025) showed that youth co-design approaches and carefully

planned pedagogical interventions can empower young people to engage in bridging traditional and contemporary cultural representations without compromising authenticity. At the local governance level, Costan (2026) and Henares et al. (2026) highlighted the importance of grassroots community systems (e.g. Purok) and a clear institutional policy framework in mobilizing resources and gaining community support for heritage conservation. In handling administrative problem, Mesana et al. (2026) showed that the management of a festival in public sector is beset with huge logistical challenges and political changes which requires synchronized co-ordination between the school director, cultural agencies and the municipal planners to ensure that the students' welfare is protected. In addition, Rachman, (2024) and Tan et al. (2026) found that community-engaged digital resources and online environments provide opportunities for youth to become digital archivists, preserving and promoting living heritage for future generations and across the globe.

Although there are strong theoretical and practical bases in scholarship that underlie the participation of youth, cultural management, and digital archiving, there is a lack of direct, bottom-up strategic recommendations based on the lived experiences of high school grand champions in the cultural context of the Philippines, particularly in its rural areas. The focus of previous research tends to be at the adult perspective of the institution, with little exploration of the insights and reflections of successful student-dancers. To bridge this gap of practice, policy and theory, the present study provides a synthesis of the recommendations provided by the grand champion performers of the Laak National High School for the development of cultural talent of the youth, protectorate of the welfare of performers and preservation of the living heritage through the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival in Davao de Oro, which can be utilized by the cultural managers, school director, and municipal tourism planners.

METHODS

Design

The design employed in this study was qualitative research. An effective lens for unpacking complex socio-cultural phenomena is qualitative research which enabled the investigation to be built upon the first-hand accounts, personal meanings, and unique perspectives of the individuals involved (Degeling & Rock, 2020). The use of this framework allowed the study to examine the detailed narratives of the grand champion performers from the Laak National High School on the following: preparation of the artists; emotional and physical challenges faced; triumphs during the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival, and ideas about how the local historical struggles can be used as a tourism product for Davao de Oro.

In particular, the following research design used for this inquiry was descriptive phenomenological design. Phenomenology aims to discover and explain the basic nature of a phenomenon as it is lived and understood by the people who experience it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By applying descriptive phenomenology, the researchers were able to discover and distill the common, lived experiences of the performance team from the Laak National High School as they cooperated in the process of creating a performance, enacting it on stage, and experiencing the cultural reflections of the festival. Personal accounts of the participants were explored and the results were interpreted as a reflection of their own accounts and subjective experiences in their quest as champion players.

Locale

This study was conducted in a public secondary educational institution, Laak National High School. It is geographically located in Barangay Poblacion in the interior municipality of Laak (formerly San Vicente) in Davao de Oro which is connected to major land transportation systems from the northern Davao Region (Department of Education [DepEd], 2020; PhilAtlas, 2020). The community is located in a landlocked agro-forested Municipality that covers 768.00 sq. km. (or 16.84% of the total land area of Davao de Oro) where agriculture, forestry, and abundant indigenous cultural heritage is highly dependent (PhilAtlas, 2020). Laak Barangay High School was originally established in 1974 as Laak Barangay High School and presently serves an important function in an LGU with a total population of 79,744 (PhilAtlas, 2020; Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2021) which is 10.39% of the provincial total.

Academic instruction facilities, multipurpose halls, rehearsal grounds are located near the municipal civic center and local government hub, which are located in the premises of Laak National High School (PhilAtlas, 2020; DepEd, 2020). The school premises were used as a hub of training for student-athletes, performing arts groups, and cultural groups for municipal and provincial competitions (DepEd, 2020). The institution has recently established itself as a regional hub of educational and artistic excellence, nurturing artistic talents that reflect the socio-cultural heritage and identity of Davao de Oro (DepEd, 2020; Province of Davao de Oro, 2020).

Laak National High School was chosen as the study site because it was accessible and was the home and rehearsal venue of the grand champion performers in Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival. The data gathering from the student performers proved to be easier as the school setting was familiar, functional, and receptive for the student artists to share their experiences in art production, which was vital in promoting local youth artistry and contributing to the influx of tourists in Davao de Oro and the socio-cultural identity of the city (Province of Davao de Oro, 2020).

Participants and Sampling

In this research, a purposive sampling procedure was utilized and 10 participants were chosen. The selection of the participants was done by purposive sampling as they were selected based on their experiences and characteristics related to the phenomenon under investigation (Bartholomew et al., 2021) based on the following criteria: (1) Member of the SalinLahi Performing Arts Guild; (2) Active as a performer in the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival 2026; (3) Represented Laak National High School in the said festival and secured the grand championship title. Those who were not members of SalinLahi Performing Arts Guild, who did not participate as performers during the 2026 Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival, or who were only backstage crew, choreographers, directors, spectators, supporters, and indirectly involved in the Laak National High School contingent were excluded from the study. The participants were selected because they have had personal experience of the physical performance, emotional preparation, stage delivery, challenges and success as champion performers.

This sample consisted of individuals who were enrolled to take part in the inquiry and met the inclusion criteria, indicated their willingness to participate, and amounted to 10 in total. Participants were those primary dancers and performers that played the main story line of the dance. This was reinforced by the SalinLahi Performing Arts Guild of Laak National High School which earned the 2026 Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival Championship, which provided a strong cultural symbol of turning historical conflicts into a tourism asset in Davao de Oro (Province of Davao de Oro, 2020). The researchers meticulously reviewed individuals who satisfied the criteria set and who were able to give an in-depth verbal account of the challenges and successes experienced directly on stage. Therefore, the method used was in line with the qualitative phenomenological method which emphasized the obtaining of meaningful accounts from the participants who had first-hand experience of the phenomenon studied by Bartholomew et al. (2021).

Instrument

To achieve the qualitative depth of the study, the researchers created an interview guide that would enable them to traverse how historical tragedy and hardship are creatively re-imagined in cultural performing arts and how local heritage is exploited as a local tourism resource. Semi-structured qualitative tools enable the study to be systematic, while still providing a space for the participants to share their true experience and interpretations in their own voice (Kegler et al., 2019). The main instrument used was the open-ended questions arranged within the five thematic domains which were: (1) the artistic preparation and rehearsals in SalinLahi's Performing Arts Guild; (2) physical, emotional, and creative challenges faced while developing performances; (3) stage performance and successful championship during the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival; (4) their personal perception of how historical scars are being transformed into cultural expression; and (5) their reflections on the meaning of their performative victory for the development and visibility of tourism in Davao de Oro. The interview guide was also subjected to expert validation prior to administration to ensure that the content was valid, the questions were clear, they were relevant to the research objectives and that there were no ethical issues.

The same basic interview protocol was consistently applied to all 10 grand champion student performers maintaining methodological rigor and with appropriate conversational flexibility. The use of semi-structured interview tools, as stated by Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021), provided a structured thematic boundary to ensure that the data collection was retained within the central phenomenon, and offered enough flexibility for emergent findings. Throughout the interview sessions, probing and follow-up questions were interwoven where participants shared nuanced reflections on their performative journey, physical endurance, emotional connection to the theme of the performance and stage victories. The instrument allowed the researchers to capture the whole process of the physical training to the way how the performers of the Laak National High School were able to be instrumental in the representation of the province of Davao de Oro as a cultural tourism hotspot, through open-ended question answering, instead of combining the two.

Data Gathering Procedure

It was important to have a systematic and rigorous data collection procedure for qualitative data that was being gathered. In their study, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested a framework for the data collection procedure. This involved gaining access to administrative permissions, identifying the important participants, gathering in-depth narrative data, and methodically transcribing the data to facilitate its organization into themes.

The process of data collection began with the formal permission and ethical clearance from the administration of the school and the moderators of performing arts at Laak National High School. With institutional permission, the researchers contacted members of the SalinLahi Performing Arts Guild that met the inclusion criteria. The study goals, voluntary participation, and full confidentiality were clearly explained to the 10 selected student performers before securing informed consent and assent. Individual interview schedules were set for each performer and quiet rooms set up inside the school building to ensure that an environment for comfort and non-disruption was provided.

Face-to-face in-depth, semi structured interviews were used for primary data collection. All sessions were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent, and field notes were taken to record the participants' full range of verbal responses, as well as context, emotion, and reflection. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and carefully scrutinized after each interview. The qualitative accounts were transcribed and preliminary themes were developed by systematically organizing the accounts in accordance with Creswell and Poth (2018) guidelines for systematic qualitative analysis, with the themes being physical training in the show, the show's staging, emotional connection to the historical themes, and the performer's perception of cultural tourism.

Data Analysis

The data that was obtained was analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis, which is suitable for qualitative phenomenological studies. Thematic analysis is one of the basic methods in qualitative analysis where the patterns of meaning are identified, organized, and interpreted systematically across a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The researchers analyzed the data from the student performers by using the updated six-phase reflexive framework: (1) familiarizing the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) constructing candidate themes; (4) reviewing and checking candidate themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the research report (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The analytic process was not executed in a linear, sequential way, but rather was recursive with the researchers to and from the different phases in order to further deepen the interpretation of the results.

The researchers made repeated readings and took initial notes of the interview recordings of the grand champion performers, systematically transcribing the data in practice to immerse themselves in the data. Open codes were generated in a structured manner, representing significant parts of the text in terms of the participants' words and their underlying reflections. Shared ideas and concepts were grouped together to form clustered themes, which were the common lived experiences of the performers of Laak National High School. The researchers systematically analyzed the experiences of the performers and how they experienced these, from their physical rehearsals, and their emotional attachment to the local history, to the challenges of performing, the successes of their performances, how they were represented, and their views of their contribution to tourism in Davao de Oro.

Eventually, these themes were identified, given names, and integrated into a holistic description of the transformation of historical scars and socio-cultural memories on stage into a celebrated tourism asset at the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualizing and Physically Portraying Historical Struggles, Socio-Environmental Disasters, and Community Scars through Festival Street Dance

In the recently concluded Kadayawan Festival 2026 in Davao City, the melting pot of Mindanao culture in the province of Davao del Sur, the Laak National High School represented Davao de Oro. In the said event, the school represented the province in the Indayog sa Kadalanan, one of the many events of the festival.

In the said event, the Laak National High School was hailed as the champion. The festival dance presented with emotion, it ultimately showcased the history of Davao de Oro, it portrayed grief, loss, injustice, hope, bayanihan, and it presented a community that copes. To understand the journey of turning this story into art this study interviewed the dancers, results are presented in the succeeding section of this paper.

Theme 1: Echoes of the Past

Winning the *Indayog sa Kadalanan* began with conceptualizing the dance itself. The participants believed in using dance as a medium to portray the history of Laak and its people. This portrayal of history must be told in its purest form, from the tragedies it faced, the people it lost, and the collective effort it took to survive what was unjustly delivered. Hence, the presented dance followed through four (4) events, as described by the participants:

Participant 5

“Ang mga panghitabo sama sa Pablo, baha ug landslide, ug mga insidente sa seguridad among gihulagway isip pahinumdom sa mga samad sa kasaysayan.”

“Events such as Pablo on December 04, 2012, flooding and landslides on February 2, 2024, and security incidents were portrayed as reminders of historical scars.”

Participant 2

“Ang paghisgot sa pagkaplag sa namatay nga babaye... katong October 27, 2025.”

“The reference to the deceased woman...last October 27, 2025.”

Participant 3

“Sa bahin sa pag-atake sa plantasyon...October 20, 2021”

“For the reported plantation attack...October 20, 2021.”

The results show that participating in the Kahimunan festival has led the participants to study historical events and tragedies in the locality. In doing so, they have gained a solid historical foundation to create a history-based storyline for their dance performance. This method of conceptualizing reflects youth performer's civic interest and local identity.

The participants used the said events as the main storyline for their choreography, a collective agreement that these events took place as a story of Laak unfolds. The past are the voice of the land and the victims, it is a reference for resilience, hope and progress. Participants supported this echo as they said:

Participant 6

“Ang ideya sa Laak sa dahon sa kasaysayan nagpakita nga ang matag panghitabo usa ka pahina, apan dili kini ang kataposang kapitulo.”

“The idea of Laak on the pages of history suggests that each event is a page, but not the final chapter.”

Participant 10

“Ang tema nga Laak sa Dahon ng Kasaysayan nagpasabot para nako nga daghang pahina ang atong lungsod: adunay kalamidad, kahadlok, pagkawala, pag-ampo, ug pag-uswag.”

“The theme Laak sa Dahon ng Kasaysayan means that our town has many pages: disaster, fear, loss, prayer, and progress.”

Participant 8

“Ang mga insidente nga nagbilin og kahadlok gipakita isip bahin sa kasaysayan, samtang ang pag-ampo ug pagtinabangay nagrepresentar sa paglaom ug pag-uswag.”

“Incidents that left fear were shown as part of history, while prayer and cooperation represented hope and progress.”

Overall, the findings on the theme Echoes of the Past demonstrate how the participants conceptualized street dance as a medium for preserving local history, communicating collective experiences, and expressing community resilience. By incorporating historical disasters and security-related incidents into their performance, the participants transformed the painful experiences of Laak into a narrative that acknowledged past suffering while emphasizing hope, cooperation, and progress. These findings are supported by Amoroso and Atole (2024), who highlighted how street dance communicates historical and social realities through embodied and symbolic representations, and by Artazo et al. (2024), who emphasized the role of festival performances in preserving local heritage and connecting younger generations with their community's history. The participants' portrayal of adversity alongside hope and development also reflects Aparecio and Torrejas' (2024) discussion of community resilience and adaptation following environmental disruptions. Through *Indayog sa Kadalanan*, the performers presented the community's historical scars as significant parts of its identity, demonstrating that the past can be remembered not only through the tragedies endured but also through the collective determination to move forward.

Theme 2: Symbolic Choreography

The use of symbolism in choreography made it more effective for the participants to share the history of Laak. Events or scenes involving anxiety, and anger were emphasized using percussive-dramatic dances, while grief and loss were delivered in silence and aggrieved movements--stillness delivered internal tension. Evidently, percussive-dance movements were described by the participants. These steps include strong stomp, sudden falls, shaking, and running:

Participant 1

“Sa among sayaw, gigamit namo ang kusog nga pagtapak ug kalit nga pagyukbo aron ipakita ang kakusog sa Bagyong Pablo.”

“In our dance, strong stomps and sudden falls represented the force of Typhoon Pablo.”

Participant 2

“Para nako, ang matag panghitabo adunay kaugalingong lihok. Ang pag-uyog ug pagdagan naghulagway sa kalit nga katalagman; ang pagtabang sa kapikas nagpasabot sa pagbangon.”

“For me, each event has its own movement. Shaking and running portray sudden danger, while helping a partner symbolizes recovery.”

Participant 5

“Ang among choreography dili lang puro kusog; adunay kahilom aron ipakita ang pagkawala ug kahadlok.”

“Our choreography was not only forceful; it included silence to convey loss and fear.”

Participant 8

“Gigamit namo ang contrast: kusog nga lihok alang sa katalagman ug hinay nga lihok alang sa pagbangutan ug pagpamalandong.”

“We used contrast: forceful movements for danger and slower movements for mourning and reflection.”

Symbolic choreography also is manifested in the dance formations, the shift in the emotions like turmoil to community cooperation is shown by lifting a teammate. Formation that included the opening formation with an individual being revealed portrayed how the people of Laak continue to bounce back each time it falls down.

Participant 6

“Sa sayaw, among gihulagway ang pagbalhin gikan sa kagubot ngadto sa pagtinabangay. Ang mga lihok 1332ap ag-alsa sa kauban nagpasabot sa pagbangon human sa kalamidad.”

“In the dance, we portrayed a shift from turmoil to cooperation. Lifting a teammate symbolized recovery after disaster.”

Participant 7

“Para nako, ang mga formation nagrepresentar sa lain-laing tingog sa Laak. Ang kataposang formation nagpasabot nga ang komunidad nagpadayon bisan adunay mga samad.”

“For me, the formations represented the different voices of Laak. The final formation showed that the community continues despite its scars.”

Participant 10

“Sa choreography, ang pagkapukan naghulagway sa pagsulay, samtang ang pagbarog ug pag-abli sa formation nagpasabot sa paglaom ug panaghiusa.”

“In the choreography, falling represented hardship, while standing and opening the formation symbolized hope and unity.”

Participant 7

“Ang kataposang formation nagpasabot nga ang komunidad nagpadayon bisan adunay mga samad.”

“The final formation showed that the community continues despite its scars.”

The participants represented recovery through coordinated movements that emphasized cooperation, mutual assistance, and unity. Helping, lifting, and balancing with fellow performers symbolized collective efforts to overcome adversity, while the final formations conveyed the community's determination to continue despite its historical scars. These representations suggest that the performers understood recovery as a shared responsibility rather than an individual accomplishment.

Overall, the findings under the theme *Symbolic Choreography* demonstrate how the participants transformed historical experiences into a visual and embodied narrative through contrasting movements, emotional expressions, and symbolic formations. These findings are supported by Amoroso and Atole (2024), who explained that street dance movements, staging, and other physical elements function as signifiers of broader social realities and historical experiences. Similarly, Ling (2025) discussed street dance as a medium through which young performers express complex cultural narratives and social experiences through embodied movement and creative choreography. The transition from falling to rising and from disorder to cooperation also complements Castro's (2026) discussion of dance as an embodied practice that fosters community bonding and the expression of shared experiences. Taken together, these studies support the interpretation that symbolic choreography served as a central storytelling mechanism through which the performers communicated Laak's historical struggles, emotional experiences, and collective resilience. The dance's significance therefore extended beyond technical execution, as the performers used their bodies and formations to transform the community's historical scars into an artistic expression of solidarity, remembrance, and hope.

Theme 3: Reverential Portrayal

Reverential portrayal of history involves portraying painful community experiences with dignity, compassion, and sensitivity. Their responses indicate that the performance was intended to honor the people affected by death, disasters, and reported security incidents rather than sensationalize their suffering.

Participant 2

"Ang paghisgot sa pagkaplag sa namatay nga babaye kinahanglan buhaton nga may respeto, dili aron makapahadlok sa audience."

"The reference to the deceased woman must be handled respectfully, not simply to frighten the audience."

Participant 5

"Ang eksena sa namatay nga babaye among gipasabot nga may dignidad ug pag-amping."

"The scene concerning the deceased woman was treated with dignity and care."

Participant 9

"Among gipakita ang panghitabo sa babaye nga namatay nga may pagkamahinatagon ug dignidad, kay ang matag kinabuhi angay tahoron."

"We treated the story of the deceased woman with compassion and dignity because every life deserves respect."

Participant 3

"Sa bahin 1333ap ag-atake sa plantasyon...nga dili magpasabot nga among gipamatud-an ang tanang detalye sa report."

"For the reported plantation attack.... without claiming that every detail of the report has been independently confirmed."

Overall, the findings under the theme *Reverential Portrayal* demonstrate that the participants viewed historical storytelling as a responsibility that required dignity, compassion, and sensitivity toward the people and communities represented. Their efforts to portray death respectfully and avoid presenting unverified details as established facts suggest that the artistic value of the performance was connected not only to its emotional impact but also to the ethical considerations underlying its creation. These findings complement Fabros et al. (2023), who discussed how narratives involving tragedy and human suffering can contribute to public awareness, collective remembrance, and tourism when presented within appropriate cultural and heritage frameworks. In this context, the performers' choices illustrate how symbolic representation can communicate painful histories without reducing human suffering to spectacle. The findings further complement Artazo et al. (2024), whose discussion of festival dance highlights the role of performance in preserving and recontextualizing community heritage for contemporary audiences. The participants' approach to *Indayog sa Kadalanan* demonstrates that cultural performances can serve as spaces for remembrance and public storytelling while maintaining sensitivity toward human suffering and the integrity of historical narratives.

Lived Experiences, Physical Hardships, and Personal Sacrifices Endured by Student Performers During Intensive Festival Preparation

Theme 1: Physiological and Psychological Demands

As young artists, the participants are in constant struggle of balancing academics and the commitment required to fulfill their role as a dancer. Being accepted as one of the dancers representing the province is a sought-after opportunity by many young dancers as well. TPressure extends from perceived fear of failure, inability, and the encroaching competition which affects their confidence. The physical and cognitive demands required to fulfill their roles is a cycle for the student-dancers, and this is true for their preparation for the *Indayog sa Kadalanan* Festival.

Participant 4

"Naay mga adlaw nga na-pressure ko kay basin masayop ko ug madaot ang formation."

Some days I felt pressured because I feared making a mistake and disrupting the formation.

Participant 5

"Gikapoy ko ug usahay naguol kay dili dayon makuha ang lihok."

I became tired and sometimes discouraged when I could not master a movement quickly.

Participant 8

"Ang pressure sa kompetisyon ug kahadlok nga makalimot sa choreography nakaapekto sa akong kumpiyansa."

In pursuit of reducing feelings of fear in losing, the participants believed that practice and increased time and effort in the dance would help them win. Situations would also warrant that despite an extended period of time spent on practicing they remain obligated to report to school. Fulfilling these roles is physically and psychologically challenging and this is collectively experienced by the participants.

Participant 1

"Kapoy kaayo ang balik-balik nga ensayo kay kinahanglan balansehon ang klase, assignments, ug practice."

Repeated rehearsals were exhausting because we had to balance classes, assignments, and practice.

Participant 6

“Ang pag-eskwela ug ensayo sa samang panahon maoy akong dakong hagit.”

Balancing school and rehearsal were my biggest challenge.

Participant 2

“Lisod ang ensayo sa init ug usahay sakit ang lawas, samtang naa pay quizzes ug deadlines.”

Rehearsing in the heat was difficult, and our bodies sometimes hurt while quizzes and deadlines continued.

The findings under the theme *Physiological and Psychological Demands* demonstrate that preparing for the *Indayog sa Kadalanan* Festival involved physical exhaustion, performance anxiety, and the challenge of balancing academic responsibilities with intensive rehearsals. These findings are supported by Santos et al. (2026), who documented the psychological pressure, physical exhaustion, and personal sacrifices experienced by performers preparing for the Indak-Indak sa Kadayawan Festival. Similarly, Lumaad et al. (2026) highlighted the difficulties student-dancers encounter when balancing academic demands with prolonged rehearsals, including time-management challenges, academic strain, and fatigue. The experiences of the Laak National High School dancers illustrate the determination and personal sacrifices required to pursue performance excellence while fulfilling their responsibilities as students.

Theme 2: Bayanihan

In the preparation for the dance, the participants experienced and manifested *Bayanihan*, a Filipino core value. The collective solidarity reflected unity, mutual support, and shared responsibility. This value allowed the creation of a community within the group as they navigated through schedule of practice, resource/s or lack thereof.

Further, this value encouraged the participants to overcome doubts, discouragement, and rehearsal difficulties through encouragement, cooperation, peer teaching, and emotional support. Their responses indicate that teamwork created an environment in which mistakes were treated as opportunities for learning rather than reasons for blame. The support of teammates, classmates, leaders, and coaches helped performers maintain confidence and continue practicing despite exhaustion and pressure.

Participant 1

“Nagdasigay mi, nag-ambitay sa gamit, ug nagpahinumdom nga ang among sayaw para sa among lungsod.”

We encouraged one another, shared materials, and remembered that our performance was for our town.

Again, by embodying the core value of Bayanihan, the participants addressed resource limitations by sharing available materials, modifying props, using existing resources, dividing tasks, and adjusting rehearsal schedules. Their responses suggest that limited resources encouraged practical problem-solving and collaboration rather than preventing them from completing the performance. These strategies enabled the group to continue developing its choreography despite constraints in materials, time, and transportation.

Participant 3

“Usahay kulang ang oras ug materyales, apan among gi-adjust ang props ug nagpraktis sa mga basic movement hangtod magkasinabot ang tanan.”

Sometimes time and materials were limited, but we adapted our props and practiced basic movements until everyone was coordinated.

Participant 5

“Nagbahin-bahin mi sa buluhaton ug nagtinabangay sa paghimo sa props gikan sa mga materyales nga naa na.”

We divided tasks and helped make props from materials already available.

Participant 9

“Usahay kulang ang props ug ang uban namo layo pa ang balay. Nakatabang ang pag-coordinate sa schedule, pagpaambit sa materials, ug pagdasigay.”

Sometimes we lacked props, and some of us lived far away. Coordinating schedules, sharing materials, and encouraging one another helped.

These accounts demonstrate that *Bayanihan* was manifested not only through emotional encouragement but also through concrete collective actions. Sharing materials, dividing tasks, modifying props, and coordinating schedules enabled the participants to address practical difficulties while maintaining their commitment to the performance. Their shared dedication to representing their town provided a common purpose that strengthened cooperation despite individual challenges and resource constraints.

This reflects that the theme *Bayanihan* demonstrate collective solidarity played an important role in helping the participants navigate the physical, emotional, and logistical demands of festival preparation. These findings are supported by Santos et al. (2026), who documented the challenges and resource constraints encountered by performers and creative teams during festival preparation, highlighting the importance of collective effort in achieving performance goals.

Alteration of Student Performers' Self-Perception and Personal Valuation of Community Historical Identity and Cultural Heritage Through Festival Success**Theme 1: Strengthened Cultural Identity**

More than just being student-performers, after winning the competition the participants perceived increased identification with the province of Laak. They are active storytellers of their province's land and people. As members of the youth winning this competition had made them see a shift from viewing the performance solely as a competition toward recognizing themselves as contributors to historical remembrance and cultural continuity. Winning the championship strengthened the participants' pride in their municipality and broadened their understanding of how one can relate and contribute to their community.

Participant 2

“Nakalipay nga nidaog mi, pero mas dako ang akong garbo kay nahibal-an nako nga ang Laak adunay istoryang angay paminawon. Ang mga katalagman ug kagubot dili mao ang tibuok pagkatawo sa lungsod; apil usab ang kaisog ug pagtinabangay sa mga tawo.”

Winning made me happy, but I felt even prouder to learn that Laak has a story worth hearing. Disasters and conflict do not define the town completely; the courage and cooperation of its people are also part of its identity.

Participant 4

“Ang championship nakapahimo nako nga mas mapasigarbuhon sa among lungsod. Dili nato kalimtan ang mga tawo nga naapektuhan sa kalamidad o kahadlok, apan mahimo natong hinumdoman usab ang ilang kusog ug ang mga paningkamot sa pagpadayon.”

The championship made me prouder of our town. We should not forget people affected by disasters or fear, but we can also remember their strength and their efforts to move forward.

Participant 6

“Sa pagkadaog, akong naamgohan nga mahimo diay namong irepresentar ang lungsod sa paagi nga makapadasig sa uban.”

Winning made me realize that we could represent our town in a way that inspires others.

The findings under the theme Strengthened Cultural Identity demonstrate that winning the grand championship deepened the participants' pride in Laak and strengthened their identification with their community's history and cultural heritage. Their experiences indicate that the achievement transformed their perception of themselves from student-performers competing for recognition into representatives capable of communicating their community's struggles, courage, and resilience. These findings are supported by Santos et al. (2026), who explained that festival victories can transform the sacrifices and challenges endured during preparation into sources of personal validation and community pride. Similarly, Good et al. (2020) found that participation in school- and community-based traditional performing arts can strengthen young people's self-esteem, sense of belonging, and cultural identity. Their championship became more than a competitive achievement, as it encouraged them to recognize the value of their municipality's historical experiences and their capacity to represent these experiences through artistic expression.

Theme 2: Stewards of Culture

The participants increasingly perceived themselves as active contributors to preserving and transmitting their community's historical identity through artistic expression. Their experiences reinforced the importance of passing local history to younger generations, promoting cultural participation, and representing community experiences responsibly.

Participant 3

“Sa pagkadungog sa resulta, akong gibati nga ang among sakripisyo adunay katuyoan. Mas nasabtan nako nga ang kasaysayan kinahanglan ipasa sa kabatan-onan pinaagi sa mga pamaagi nga duol sa ilang kinabuhi, sama sa sayaw ug teatro.”

When we heard the result, I felt that our sacrifices had a purpose. I better understood that history should be passed on to young people through forms connected to their lives, such as dance and theatre.

Participant 8

“Sa pagkadungog sa among ngalan, akong gibati nga ang among paningkamot nakita ug gipabilhan.”

When our name was announced, I felt that our effort had been seen and valued.

Participant 7

“Ang panginahanglan nga ang mga kabatan-onan dili lang makadungog niini kondili makatabang sa pagpreserbar niini.”

Young people should not only hear about history but also help preserve it.

Participant 7

“Ang titulo nga Grand Champion nakapahinumdom nako nga ang teamwork mas lig-on kaysa sa usa ka tawo lang. Mas nasabtan nako ang kasaysayan sa Davao de Oro ug ang panginahanglan nga ang mga kabatan-onan dili lang makadungog niini kondili makatabang sa pagpreserbar niini.”

The Grand Champion title reminded me that teamwork is stronger than one person alone. I better understood Davao de Oro's history and the need for young people not only to hear it but also to help preserve it.

The participants' experience emphasized that cultural preservation involves more than performing traditional movements; it also requires understanding the meaning of local history and actively communicating its significance to younger audiences. These findings align with Lobo (2024), who emphasized that students' active participation in traditional cultural dances deepens their understanding of heritage and encourages their involvement in cultural preservation. Similarly, Nguyen Thanh and Phanlukthao (2026) highlighted the role of street festivals in transmitting intangible cultural heritage, revitalizing traditional narratives, and strengthening cultural identity across generations. Winning the championship strengthened their awareness that they could help preserve Davao de Oro's historical narratives through dance and inspire other young people to participate in safeguarding their community's cultural heritage.

Theme 3: A Story Told is a Win

Earning the competition and being held as a champion is a win. For the majority of the participants, being able to tell the story is already a competition won. They recognized how events such as the Kahimunan Festival is a platform for the youth performers to fulfill their responsibility. The participants developed a deeper appreciation for the people who experienced past tragedies and those who helped their communities recover. Their responses suggest presenting historical suffering through dance. Rather than concealing painful experiences, the participants believed these histories should be acknowledged honestly to promote understanding among future generations.

Participant 5

"Nakaamgo ko nga ang pagkadaog dili katapusan sa trabaho. Mas dako kini nga responsibilidad nga ipakita ang kasaysayan sa hustong paagi ug dili himuong dekorasyon lamang ang kasakit sa mga tawo."

I realized that winning is not the end of the work. It brings a greater responsibility to represent history accurately and not turn people's suffering into mere decoration.

Participant 9

"Nakita nako nga ang award mahimong paagi aron mas daghang tawo makaila sa among komunidad. Apan kinahanglan magpabilin kaming mapainubsanon ug responsible, kay ang tinuod nga kadaugan mao ang pagpreserba sa istorya ug pagdasig sa uban nga moapil sa kultura."

I saw that an award can help more people learn about our community. But we must remain humble and responsible, because true victory means preserving the story and inspiring others to participate in culture.

Participant 10

"Ang pagkadaog nagpamatuod nga ang mga estudyante mahimong tigpanalipod sa 1338ocal nga kasaysayan pinaagi sa arte."

Winning showed that students can protect local history through art.

Based on the participants' accounts it is emphasized that the value of victory lies in preserving historical narratives, honoring the experiences of affected communities, and inspiring future generations to appreciate local heritage. These findings are supported by Santos et al. (2026), who described how festival achievements can give meaning to performers' sacrifices and strengthen their sense of pride in representing their community. Furthermore, Lobo (2024) explained that active engagement in cultural dance enables students to internalize the significance of historical narratives and recognize their role in heritage preservation. In the context of the *Indayog sa Kadalanan* competition, the participants' achievement therefore extended beyond receiving the grand

championship title. It also represented their ability to use artistic performance to share their community's experiences, acknowledge historical suffering with dignity, and encourage continued youth participation in cultural preservation.

Student Performers' Evaluation of Their Championship Performance in Elevating the Kahimunan Festival and Establishing Laak as a Viable Cultural Tourism Destination in Davao de Oro

Theme 1: Tourism Appeal

The participants believed that upon winning the *Indayog sa Kadalanan*, Laak had earned a tourism appeal. This means that the title itself may have potentially attracted tourists and visitors. More than just drawing public attention, the win had brought attention to the choreography, the commitment of the people involved and insight on how Laak is. It provides an avenue for introducing the municipality's history, cultural heritage, and people. Through its movements, narratives, and artistic presentation, audiences gain insight into Laak's identity and the resilience of its community. Thus, the dance extends beyond entertainment, becoming a form of cultural storytelling that promotes Laak as a destination worth discovering.

Participant 1

"Ang sayaw mahimong makadani og bisita kay masabtan nila ang Laak pinaagi sa istorya, musika, ug lihoc."

Dance can attract visitors because they can understand Laak through story, music, and movement.

Participant 10

"Ang sayaw makapakita sa Laak isip destinasyon nga adunay istorya, kultura, ug lig-on nga komunidad."

Dance can present Laak as a destination with stories, culture, and a resilient community.

The findings suggest that the championship performance enhanced the potential of Laak to attract tourists by presenting its history, cultural identity, and community resilience through street dance. The participants viewed the performance as more than entertainment, recognizing its capacity to introduce Laak to wider audiences and encourage visitors to learn about the municipality. This finding is supported by Finkel and Platt (2020), who explained that cultural festivals can reshape how places are perceived by highlighting their creative vitality, resilience, and distinctive identity. Similarly, Richards and King (2022) emphasized that the artistic quality and emotional resonance of festival performances can strengthen audience engagement and influence perceptions of the host destination. However, while the championship may enhance the municipality's tourism appeal, its long-term effects on actual visitor numbers and tourism activity would require further assessment.

Theme 2: Kahimunan in a New Light

The participants believed that the championship in *Indayog sa Kadalanan* brought renewed recognition and appreciation to the Kahimunan Festival. The achievement elevated the festival beyond its local celebration by showcasing Laak's cultural traditions, artistic expressions, and collective identity to a wider audience. Through the dance performance, the festival gained an opportunity to be recognized not only as a celebration of tradition but also as a meaningful representation of the municipality's heritage and community pride. Thus, the championship contributed to reshaping how the Kahimunan Festival is perceived, opening possibilities for greater cultural recognition and continued festival development.

Participant 2

“Naay story, naay kalabotan sa mga panghitabo sa ilang lugar...and mga event sama sa Kahimunan tuod usa ka maka contribute sa kabag ohan.”

There is story, there is awareness in the history...events like Kahimunan contribute to change.

Participant 9

“Ang Festival diay na parehas sa Kahimunan is dili pabonggahay jud sa mga props...dalan 1340in isa matagprobinsya nga iambit ilang estorya.”

Festivals like the Kahimunan is not about the grand props...it is a way for each province to tell their story.

Participant 7

“Unta mas daghan na gayod karon ang magapil or mubisita sa Kahimunan kay daghan makat onon sa mga matong lugar bahin sa history tungod lamang sa mga sayaw na dili kaayong dugay.”

I hope more people visits or attends the Kahimunan they can learn a lot about the history of the place thorough a dance in a limited time.

The findings indicate that the championship offered an opportunity to elevate the Kahimunan Festival's recognition by emphasizing its role as a platform for cultural storytelling rather than merely a celebration characterized by elaborate props and performances. The participants recognized that festivals can communicate local histories, traditions, and community experiences to broader audiences, potentially strengthening the festival's identity and encouraging greater public interest. This interpretation aligns with Limjuico et al. (2022), who found that festival enhancement and rebranding can improve a municipality's competitive image, strengthen local pride, and attract wider tourist interest. Similarly, Leal Londoño et al. (2022) emphasized that specialized festival events can establish emotional connections between an event and potential visitors, contributing to the host destination's public image. Nevertheless, sustaining this recognition would require continued cultural programming and promotion that preserve the festival's authenticity and community significance.

Strategic Recommendations and Insights offered by Grand Champion Performers to Cultural Managers, School Directors, and Municipal Tourism Planners to Nurture Youth Talent and Preserve Living Heritage**Theme 1: Institutionalizing Performances Through Year-Round Cultural Programming**

The participants recommended integrating street-dance performances into regular school programs, community celebrations, cultural tours, museum activities, and annual showcases rather than limiting them to festival competitions. They believed that recurring performances would give visitors more opportunities to experience Laak's cultural heritage throughout the year.

Participant 6

“Ang sayaw mahimong bahin sa tourism kung iapil sa cultural tour, school exchange, ug community celebration.”

Dance can become part of tourism through cultural tours, school exchanges, and community celebrations.

Participant 8

“Kinahanglan ang tourism promotion dili lang magpasiugda sa festival, kondili magtukod usab og regular cultural learning experiences.”

Tourism promotion should not focus only on the festival but also create regular cultural learning experiences.

Participant 10

“Mahimong i-integrate 1341 in isa festival calendar, school curriculum, tourism materials, and community-led workshops, basta ang pag-promote dili mopuli o mopasobra sa kasaysayan.”

It could be integrated into the festival calendar, school curriculum, tourism materials, and community-led workshops, provided promotion does not distort or exaggerate history.

The findings highlight the participants' recommendation to institutionalize cultural performances through year-round school and community programs, cultural tours, workshops, and regular showcases. Their responses suggest that cultural heritage should remain accessible beyond the festival season, giving residents and visitors continuing opportunities to engage with Laak's history and traditions. This recommendation is consistent with Finkel and Platt (2020), who described cultural festivals as mechanisms for community representation and place positioning. Likewise, Limjuico et al. (2022) highlighted how sustained festival enhancement can strengthen a municipality's image and increase its appeal to wider audiences. These studies provide support for the participants' view that cultural programming can contribute to the continued visibility of Laak and the Kahimunan Festival. Extending performances throughout the year may also create more opportunities for student-artists to develop their skills and for cultural knowledge to be shared across generations. For these initiatives to remain sustainable, however, programming should involve local cultural knowledge holders and ensure that tourism promotion respects the historical meaning of the performances.

Theme 2: Historical Research and Respectful Representation

The participants emphasized that future student-artists should understand their community's history before translating it into choreography. They recommended researching historical events, consulting elders, respecting community experiences, and avoiding performances that portray suffering without its proper context. Their responses suggest that responsible artistic storytelling requires historical knowledge and sensitivity rather than merely reproducing movements for competition. This finding aligns with Pastera (2024), who examined Filipino college students' knowledge and understanding of intangible cultural heritage, and Selim and Farhan (2024), who demonstrated how youth can contribute to cultural heritage preservation through oral histories, testimonies, and documentary approaches. These studies support the importance of combining artistic participation with historical understanding and community knowledge.

Participant 1

“Sa umaabot nga performers, ayaw sayawa ang kasakit nga walay pagsabot sa tinuod nga kasaysayan.”
To future performers, do not portray suffering without understanding the actual history.

Participant 2

“Tambag nako sa mga bag-ong performers: pangutana sa mga tigulang ug pagtuon sa kasaysayan una maghimo og choreography.”
My advice to new performers is to ask elders and study history before creating choreography.

Participant 5

“Ang akong tambag mao ang pag-research, pagrespeto, ug pagpraktis nga adunay katuyoan.”

My advice is to research, show respect, and practice with purpose.

Participant 9

“Ang akong tambag: ayaw kopyaha lang ang lihok; sabta ang istorya.”

My advice is not to copy movements without understanding the story.

The findings demonstrate that the participants considered historical research and respectful representation essential to preserving Laak's living heritage. They emphasized that student-artists should consult elders, investigate historical events, and understand the experiences represented in their choreography rather than simply reproduce movements for competitive purposes. This finding aligns with Pastera (2024), whose study examined Filipino college students' knowledge and understanding of intangible cultural heritage, highlighting the importance of heritage awareness among young people. Similarly, Selim and Farhan (2024) discussed how youth can contribute to cultural heritage preservation through oral histories, testimonies, and documentary approaches. These studies complement the participants' recommendations by underscoring the value of historical knowledge and community-based sources in cultural preservation. In the context of Laak, combining historical research with artistic expression may help ensure that performances communicate community experiences accurately and sensitively, particularly when portraying suffering, disasters, or conflict. This approach can strengthen the educational value of cultural performances while honoring the people whose experiences are represented.

Theme 3: Sustainable Funding, Scholarships, and Equitable Access to Resources

The participants recommended stable funding, scholarships, incentives, transportation assistance, and transparent allocation of resources to support student-artists. They emphasized that students should not bear the full financial burden of preparing for cultural competitions and that support should extend beyond championship season.

Participant 1

“Kinahanglan motabang ang eskwelahan ug LGU pinaagi sa pondo, safe nga rehearsal space, cultural workshops, ug pag-ila sa paningkamot sa mga estudyante.”

Schools and the local government should provide funding, safe rehearsal spaces, cultural workshops, and recognition of students' efforts.

Participant 6

“Gikinahanglan ang LGU ug school administration nga maghatag og scholarship opportunities, accessible venues, transportation, and recognition while keeping the participants' welfare first.”

The local government and school administration should provide scholarship opportunities, accessible venues, transportation, and recognition while prioritizing participants' welfare.

Participant 9

“Ang mga opisyal ug eskwelahan kinahanglan maghatag og transparent nga pondo, mentoring, recognition, ug patas nga access sa tanang estudyante nga gustong moapil.”

Officials and schools should provide transparent funding, mentoring, recognition, and fair access for all students who want to participate.

Participant 10

“Ang LGU ug eskwelahan kinahanglan maghatag og lig-on nga budget, training, safe rehearsal areas, transport assistance, and partnerships with historians and community members. Ang liderato mahimong makatabang pinaagi 1343ap ag-coordinate ug pagsiguro nga ang suporta magpadayon, dili lang panahon sa kompetisyon.”

The local government and school should provide a stable budget, training, safe rehearsal areas, transport assistance, and partnerships with historians and community members. Leadership can help by coordinating support that continues beyond competition season.

Participant 5

“Ang mga lider sa eskwelahan ug LGU kinahanglan maminaw sa performers sa pagplano, maghatag og training ug resources, ug mosiguro nga ang cultural materials gigamit nga may pagtugot ug hustong konteksto.”

School and local leaders should include performers in planning, provide training and resources, and ensure cultural materials are used with permission and proper context.

Participant 7

“Girekomendar nako ang youth arts council, annual grants, qualified choreographers, and mental and physical safety guidelines for rehearsals and performances.”

I recommend a youth arts council, annual grants, qualified choreographers, and mental and physical safety guidelines for rehearsals and performances.

The findings indicate that the grand champion performers view the preservation of Laak's cultural heritage as a shared responsibility among student-artists, schools, local government units, cultural practitioners, and community members. Their recommendations extend beyond preparing for competitions: they call for historically informed artistic practice, safe and supportive learning environments, equitable access to resources, youth participation in decision-making, and continuing cultural education. The participants' insights suggest that cultural programs are more likely to remain meaningful when young people are supported not merely as performers but as active contributors to the documentation, interpretation, and transmission of local heritage. This interpretation is consistent with recent studies on youth participation, heritage education, and community-based arts programs (Halverson et al., 2024; No, 2024; Thanapornsangsuth et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). The recommendations provide a basis for developing a sustainable cultural development program for Laak; however, their feasibility and effectiveness would need to be evaluated with school administrators, municipal officials, cultural knowledge holders, and student performers.

Summary

The main goal of the study was to investigate how the Laak National High School grand champion performers conceptualized and physically portrayed historical struggles, socio-environmental disasters, and community "scars" of Davao de Oro through their winning performance in the Indayog sa Kadalanan during the Kahimunan Festival. The respondents were 10 student-performers from Laak National High School who directly represented the municipality and secured the grand championship title. The results indicated that the participants conceptualized street dance as a medium to preserve local history, communicating events such as Typhoon Pablo, flooding, landslides, and security incidents through "Echoes of the Past". Furthermore, the creative process utilized "Symbolic Choreography" via percussive-dramatic movements, sudden falls, strong stomps, and formations, alongside a "Reverential Portrayal" that handled painful community experiences with dignity and sensitivity.

Aside from the artistic and creative work, the study showed that the student performers endured significant physical hardships and personal sacrifices during intensive preparation. They faced physiological and psychological demands, including exhaustion from repeated rehearsals, performance anxiety, and the continuous challenge of balancing academic responsibilities, quizzes, and deadlines with intensive practice. However, these hardships were navigated through the core Filipino value of "Bayanihan," which reflected collective solidarity, mutual support, shared responsibility, peer encouragement, and practical resource sharing to overcome logistical and material constraints.

The students' successes extended beyond competition outcomes and awards. Winning the grand championship altered their self-perception, leading to a strengthened cultural identity where they viewed themselves not just as student-performers, but as active "Stewards of Culture" responsible for preserving and transmitting local heritage. They realized that "A Story Told is a Win," recognizing the importance of honoring affected communities and inspiring younger generations. Lastly, the results showed that the performers evaluated their championship performance as a catalyst that enhanced Laak's tourism appeal and presented the Kahimunan Festival in a new light. By conveying Mati/Laak's history, culture, and resilience through artistic storytelling, the performance established the municipality as a viable cultural tourism destination and demonstrated that festivals serve as platforms for communities to share their stories.

Implications

The results showed that a comprehensive approach is necessary to nurture youth talent, support student-performers, and maximize the cultural and tourism potential of local festivals. The findings of the research have implications in the following:

Institutionalizing Performances Through Year-Round Cultural Programming: Schools and local government units should integrate cultural performances into regular school programs, community celebrations, cultural tours, and annual showcases rather than limiting them strictly to competition seasons.

Historical Research and Respectful Representation: Future student-artists and cultural practitioners must conduct systematic research, consult elders, and understand historical contexts before translating community struggles into choreography, ensuring that painful experiences are portrayed with sensitivity and respect.

Sustainable Funding, Scholarships, and Equitable Access: Educational institutions and local government units must provide stable budgets, transparent funding, safe rehearsal spaces, transportation assistance, scholarships, and incentives so that students do not bear the full financial and physical burden of competition preparation.

Promote Tourism Using the Power of Storytelling: Festival performances should be strategically leveraged to supplement traditional tourism promotion by connecting cultural narratives directly to tourist attractions, thereby encouraging visitors to explore and learn about the municipality's heritage.

Documenting and Cultural Archiving: Schools, cultural committees, and local leaders should establish systematic documentation programs for choreography, music, costumes, research, and behind-the-scenes experiences to preserve knowledge for future creative teams.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration: Sustainable heritage development requires coordinated partnerships among school administrators, local government units, municipal tourism offices, cultural knowledge holders, and student-performers to align resources, training, and welfare protection.

Youth Cultural Continuity and Participation: Active involvement in cultural events enhances young people's confidence, discipline, teamwork, and appreciation for heritage, transforming the youth from passive receivers into active carriers and interpreters of local culture.

Incorporating Sustainable Creative Tourism Development: While artistic performances strengthen destination identity and audience curiosity, future tourism projects must incorporate measurable evaluation components (such as visitor inquiries, tourist awareness, and return rates) to objectively assess tangible tourism returns.

The study in a nutshell demonstrated that the journey from historical trauma and imagination to a recognized tourism destination is a multifaceted endeavor. It encompasses the safeguarding of cultural identity, the empowerment and protection of youth creative practitioners, institutional partnerships, rigorous cultural archiving, and the alignment of artistic storytelling with responsible tourism development. The experiences of the Laak National High School grand champion performers proved that the true essence of the Indayog sa Kahimunan Festival transcends competitive awards, leaving a lasting legacy of community memory, cultural pride, and destination identity.

Project Sayaw Stories of Ancestral Youth Advocating for Wellness, Unity, and Peace in Mindanao

Rationale

Mindanao is a multi-cultural region where it is possible to find different Indigenous groups with different traditions, beliefs, practices, languages and forms of expression, such as the various Lumad groups. Cultural dance is one of these, and it is a very significant way to convey stories, to pass traditions on, to build community, and to transmit knowledge from one generation to the next. But sometimes cultural differences are misinterpreted, resulting in stereotypes, discrimination and division between communities. Young people need opportunities, however, to learn and value other cultures to ensure that any differences of tradition or identity are used as an opportunity for understanding, respect, cooperation and unity.

The focus is on the youth; in SAYAW: Stories of Ancestral Youth Advocating for Wellness, Unity and Peace in Mindanao, movement, music, formations, costumes and appropriate cultural expressions are used to communicate the stories on ancestral identity, community reconciliation, unity and peace. The project is rooted in literature and program resources on cultural awareness, Philippine traditional and folk dances, cultural competence, youth development and peace-building, and the premise is that cultural dance can be used as an educational tool where youth learn information, appreciation, sensitivity, cooperation and respect for cultural diversity.

The project is rooted on the study of the Strengthening and Preservation of Philippine Folk Dances by Poralan, Babiera, and Habla (2012) which focused on the cultural awareness of secondary school students. Lobo (2026) also highlights the importance of preserving Philippine traditional dances as intangible cultural heritage and how it is correlated with students' cultural competence that provided the basis for SAYAW to incorporate cultural learning into the active engagement of students in their dances. The pedagogical significance of the integration of theoretical and procedural knowledge in folk dance learning is mentioned in Irinco (2025); meanwhile, the UNICEF (2016) Adolescent and Youth Peacebuilders Manual offers a framework on how to include youth in participatory learning processes, to manage conflict and build peaceful communities, specific to the context of Mindanao. SAYAW aims to build culturally aware students, to break down misconceptions, to foster empathy and to empower youth to utilize their talents to foster respectful and peaceful relationships through culturally respectful research, consultation, performance, and reflection.

Source of Funds

SAYAW is conceived to be a low-cost project that takes advantage of the existing school resources, the school talents, existing materials, recyclable and locally available resources, and voluntary involvement of the school community. In the source project design, there is no set amount of money, and if financial allocation is to be made in the future, it should be the most cost-effective and based on the actual needs of the schools and the approval of the financial contribution, and not require commercialization of the cultural elements.

METHODS

The implementation of SAYAW unfolds in a participatory, culturally respectful and structured process that involves students in learning, consultation, creation, rehearsal, presentation, and reflection, and moves from the following to the other:

1. **Cultural Research and Orientation:** Students/Organizers conduct research in selected Indigenous communities of Mindanao, focusing on their traditions, values, community life, ancestral identity, cultural practices and appropriate forms of artistic expression; and orient the students on cultural respect and identification of appropriate learning materials.
2. **Consultation and Story Development:** Indigenous cultural representative, elders, cultural practitioners, teachers or knowledgeable community members (if available and with proper consent) are consulted. Moreover, sacred, ceremonial or restricted cultural practices are not included and the central story is structured around the four Themes: The Ancestral Lands, When Harmony Breaks, The Path to Understanding and SAYAW ng Kapayapaan.
3. **Cultural Dance Workshop:** Providing an orientation about the cultural meaning and correct use of movements, and focus on respect and sensitivity (assisted by a knowledgeable cultural practitioner, Indigenous representative, or qualified dance instructor, as available).
4. **Rehearsal and Creative Integration:** Students blend and combine music, costume, props, space, transitions, and narration to create a musical dance sequence that tells a cultural story.
5. **Presentation and Reflection:** Students organize and present SAYAW in an adapted cultural programme, youth activity or a peace programme in the school or local community, followed by a structured youth reflection session on the “links between art and cultural diversity, respect, empathy and peaceful relationships”.
6. **Evaluation and Documentation:** Organizers collect participants, observations and audience feedback to document lessons, assess audience engagement and make recommendations for future implementation.

Persons Involved

The following key stakeholders are involved in implementing SAYAW:

1. **Students and Youth:** Primary learners, performers, storytellers, reflective participants and youth advocates for cultural respect and peace.
2. **Indigenous Cultural Representatives / Knowledge Holders:** They offer cultural guidance, in collaboration with the relevant parties and as agreed by them, to ensure appropriate and respectful representation where available.
3. **Cultural Dance Instructors / Practitioners:** Support students in acquiring culturally appropriate movement and the cultural context of movement.
4. **School Personnel and Teachers:** Supervision of activities, coordination of implementation, reflection and support for evaluation.
5. **Parents and Family Members:** Be encouraging, logistically supportive and assisting in preparation and presentation.
6. **Student Organizations:** Support with rehearsals, materials, promotion and documentation.

Time Frame

The first month will be the duration of SAYAW, organized in four weeks to include cultural research, consultation, dance workshops, rehearsals, incorporation of the arts elements, final presentation, reflection and documentation. The schedule may be flexible as per school schedule, availability of participants and consultation needs and continuation of the program will be subject to availability of school resources and participants' interest.

References

- Adeoye-Olatunde, O. A., & Olenik, N. L. (2021). Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*, 4(10), 1358–1367. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1441>
- Amoroso, S. E., & Atole, M. S. C. P. (2024). Semiotics in street dances: A reflection on the roles of power, gender, and modernization. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 291–299. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8120022>
- Aparecio, D. E., & Torrejas, I. E. (2024). Post-disaster recovery: Evaluating business resilience in MSMEs in Monkayo, Davao De Oro. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 331–337. <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1109029>
- Artazo, A. B., Tolod, L. G., & Manaois, J. O. (2024). Dancing through time: Unveiling the cultural evolution of Cagayan de Oro's Oro Higalaay Festival. *Journal of Integrated Studies*, 2(12). <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2024.0380>
- Bakker, A. B., & Mostert, K. (2024). Study demands–resources theory: Understanding student well-being in higher education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 36, Article 92. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-024-09940-8>
- Bartholomew, T., Joy, E., Kang, E., & Brown, J. (2021). A choir or cacophony? Sample sizes and quality of conveying participants' voices in phenomenological research. *Methodological Innovations*, 14(2), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20597991211040063>
- Besmonte, E. L. (2022). Identification and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of Tabaco City, Philippines, through cultural mapping. *Journal of Education, Management and Development Studies*, 2(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.52631/jemds.v2i2.106>
- Boonserm, P. (2022). Developing local dance to promote ethnic group identity in Kanchanburi for the Thai tourism industry. *Journal of Communication Arts*, 40(2), 24–40. <https://so02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jcomm/article/view/251146>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 24(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597>
- Castro, A. R. (2026). Social dancing as embodied practice: Localization and community functions in the Southern Philippines. *Jurnal Pendidikan Jasmani dan Olahraga*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpjo.v11i1.97748>
- Cesário, V. (2025). Co-designing heritage futures: Teenagers and traditional crafts in Madeira Island. *Heritage*, 8(11), Article 459. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage8110459>
- Chen, Z., Suntikul, W., & King, B. (2020). Constructing an intangible cultural heritage experiencescape: The case of the Feast of the Drunken Dragon (Macau). *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 34, Article 100659. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100659>
- Costan, E. (2026). Community-based cultural heritage preservation through the Purok system: A mixed-methods case study in a Philippine municipality. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 11, Article 1813600. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2026.1813600>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications. <https://www.sagepub.com/shop/buy-a-book/qualitative-inquiry-and-research-design-4-246896>
- Critchley, M., Kenny, S. J., Ritchie, A., & McKay, C. D. (2022). Injury rates and characteristics associated with participation in organized dance education: A systematic review. *Journal of Dance Medicine & Science*, 26(2), 87–105. <https://doi.org/10.12678/1089-313X.061522b>
- Degeling, C., & Rock, M. (2020). Qualitative research for One Health: From methodological principles to impactful applications. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 7, Article 70. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2020.00070>
- Department of Education. (2020). National inventory dashboard: Schools Division of Davao de Oro. Republic of the Philippines. <https://nid.deped.gov.ph/public-dashboard/region/Region%20XI/division/Davao%20De%20Oro>
- Eluwole, K. K., Banga, C., Lasisi, T. T., Oztüren, A., & Kiliç, H. (2022). Understanding residents' empowerment and community attachment in festival tourism: The case of Victoria Falls. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 23, Article 100674. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100674>
- Ente, N. C. L. (2025). The lived experience of Dibabawon tribe on interaction with modernization, and on cultural erosion and resilience. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 11(5), 412–425. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra21473>

- Fabros, M. G. M., Lopez, E. L. F., & Roma, M. N. (2023). Dark tourism in the Philippine context: Indicators, motivations, and spectrum. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 7(1), Article 100452. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100452>
- Finkel, R., & Platt, L. (2020). Cultural festivals and the city. *Geography Compass*, 14(9), Article e12498. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12498>
- Gavron, T., Eskenasy, N., Snir, S., Bat-Or, M., Fernandez, K. G., & Ocampo, M. T. W. (2022). Arts-based psychosocial training after the Yolanda typhoon in the Philippines. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 80, Article 101936. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2022.101936>
- Giese, J., & Keightley, E. (2024). Dancing through time: A methodological exploration of embodied memories. *Memory Studies*, 17(2), 444–457. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980221126611>
- Good, A., Sims, L., Clarke, K., & Russo, F. A. (2020). Indigenous youth reconnect with cultural identity: The evaluation of a community- and school-based traditional music program. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(2), 340–354. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22481>
- Hagi, N., Guinuntad, R., Jr., Oray, G. D., Escario, C. N., & Aspiras, L. S. (2022). The Bugkalot and the San Pugo fissures: Disaster experience and recovery as cultural history. *SARIRIT: The University Research Journal*, 11(1). <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=19524>
- Halverson, E., Saplan, K., & Martin, C. K. (2024). Building arts education policy using the tools of out-of-school time youth arts organizations. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 125(4), 300–312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2023.2212186>
- Henares, I. A. S., Day, J., Lehto, X. Y., Nicely, A., Sydnor, S., & Pangilinan, M. L. C. J. D. (2026). Predictors of community support for heritage conservation policies: The case of the city of San Fernando, Pampanga. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 21(3), 265–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2026.2664853>
- Hsu, F. C., Zhang, S., Zhang, Y., & Lee, T. J. (2022). Decision-making behavior in the sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(6), 800–812. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2546>
- Jiang, Y., Lyu, C., & Li, J. (2025). Unpacking Generation Z tourists' motivation for intangible cultural heritage tourism. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 50(5), 1263–1269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2024.2383819>
- Kanoksilapatham, B., Kachachiva, J., Chumdee, N., Suwanpakdee, S., & Phetluan, P. (2023). Tourist attraction-based cultural identity and local participation propelling sustainable cultural tourism in northern Thailand. *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies*, 23(3), 478–490. <https://doi.org/10.14456/hasss.2023.41>
- Kegler, M. C., Raskind, I. G., Comeau, D. L., Griffith, D. M., Cooper, H. L. F., & Shelton, R. C. (2019). Study design and use of inquiry frameworks in qualitative research published in *Health Education & Behavior*. *Health Education & Behavior*, 46(1), 24–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198118795018>
- Kuo, N.-T., Cheng, Y.-S., Chang, K.-C., & Hu, S.-M. (2020). How social capital affects support intention: The mediating role of place identity. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 46, 390–399. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.11.005>
- Lawangen, A., & Roberts, J. K. (2023). Interactions between disaster risk reduction and intangible culture among indigenous communities in Benguet, Philippines. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 94, Article 103801. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2023.103801>
- Leal Londoño, M. d. P., Georgescu-Paquin, A., & Arcos-Pumarola, J. (2022). Food festivals as builders of the image of a tourist destination. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 14(3), 262–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2022.2076690>
- Lee, T. H., & Jan, F.-H. (2022). How does tourism image affect visitor perceptions of a festival's identity? Influence analysis of three aboriginal festivals in Taiwan. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 24, Article 100704. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2022.100704>
- Limjuico, C. G. T., Arroyo, J. E. N. A., & Dagdag, J. C. T. (2022). Festival rebranding and its implications to the local tourism industry: The Pagsanjan experience. *Ani: Letran Calamba Research Report*, 18(1), 1–15. <https://www.ejournals.ph/article.php?id=19086>
- Lin, Y. H., & Lee, T. H. (2020). How the authentic experience of a traditional cultural festival affects the attendee's perception of festival identity and place identity. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 11(3), 357–373. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-12-2019-0061>
- Ling, X. (2025). Street dance redefined: A bridge across the knowledge gap. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 7, Article 1610656. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2025.1610656>

- Lobo, J. (2024). Students' personal experience vis-à-vis personal interest towards Philippine traditional dances with respect to dance steps, music, costume, and dance history for preservation endeavors: Does it matter? *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 43(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02762374241283544>
- Lumaad, K. T. A., Canaliya, C. F. R., Barbanida, F. R., & Belleza, S. S. (2026). Lived experiences of student-dancers in managing time and balancing academics: A phenomenological study. *International Journal of Research Publications*, 189(1), 302–311. <https://doi.org/10.47119/IJRP1001891120268451>
- Martínez-López, Z., Nouws, S., Villar, E., Mayo, M. E., & Tinajero, C. (2023). Perceived social support and self-regulated learning: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 5, Article 100291. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2023.100291>
- Mesana, J. C. B., Ricaforte, B. G. R., & de Guzman, A. B. (2025). How do foundation and local government unit (LGU)-led cultural festivals' managerial challenges differ? A phenomenographic inquiry. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 26(5), 328–357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2025.2593816>
- Nam, S. M., Park, H. Y., & Kim, M. J. (2024). Exploring the experiences of dancers who have achieved peak performance: On-stage, pre-stage, and post-stage. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1392242. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1392242>
- National Commission for Culture and the Arts. (2025). 2024 implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act No. 10066, as amended by Republic Act No. 11961, and other laws and regulations on cultural heritage. Government of the Philippines. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2025/pdf/irr_11961_2025.pdf
- National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. (2023, June 23). Igniting hope and empowerment: Davao de Oro 1st year anniversary as insurgency free. Government of the Philippines. <https://ncip.gov.ph/>
- Nguyen Thanh, H., & Phanlukthao, P. (2026). Transmitting intangible cultural heritage through cultural identity and equity: The Echoes of a Thousand Years Hue Tuong street festival. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 17(4), 629–645. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-08-2025-0119>
- No, J. G. (2024). Staging the Tarek dance: A vehicle for integrating the intangible cultural heritage of Pala'wan into physical education curriculum. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 22(2), 206–216. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12750744>
- Partosa, L. F. N. (2023). Sandurot festival as mugna: Exploring modernity and belonging through the civic festival (Doctoral dissertation, Lingnan University). Lingnan University Institutional Repository. <https://commons.ln.edu.hk/otd/174/>
- Pastera, R. J. P. (2024). Unveiling the veil: Intangible cultural heritage and the Filipino college students. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 11(2), 25–41. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/1818>
- Pavlović, M., Ogrinc, N., & Šarabon, N. (2022). Body asymmetries as risk factors for musculoskeletal injuries in dancesport, hip-hop and ballet dancers? *European Journal of Translational Myology*, 32(4), Article 11020. <https://doi.org/10.4081/ejtm.2022.11020>
- PhilAtlas. (2020). Laak, Davao de Oro profile. <https://www.philatlas.com/mindanao/r11/davao-de-oro/laak.html>
- Philippine Statistics Authority. (2021, August 17). Highlights of the population in the province of Davao de Oro based on the 2020 Census of Population and Housing (2020 CPH) (Reference Number: DvDeoro-2021-002). <https://rso11.psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-population-province-davao-de-oro-based-2020-census-population-and-housing-2020>
- Province of Davao de Oro. (2020). Official website of the Provincial Government of Davao de Oro. <https://davaodeoro.gov.ph/>
- Province of Davao de Oro. (2023, September 27). Tourism and green investments: DdO's efforts towards sustainable tourism in the province. Government of the Philippines. <https://davaodeoro.gov.ph/2023/09/27/tourism-and-green-investments-ddos-efforts-towards-sustainable-tourism-in-the-province/>
- Qin, X., Woramitmaitee, N., & Duangbung, S. (2025). Practice studies on youth engagement in intangible cultural heritage education through Shanwei Yuge Chinese folk songs. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 7(1), 45–52. <https://doi.org/10.46809/jpse.v7i1.157>
- Quadros, C. M. B. d., Zucco, F. D., Pereira, T., & Limberger, P. F. (2024). Pride (in the name of tourism): Mitigating the effects of overtourism on festivals. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 32, Article 100896. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2024.100896>
- Rachman, Y. B. (2024). Unveiling local community initiatives and participation in safeguarding cultural heritage through digital spaces. *Library Hi Tech News*, 41(7), 17–19. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LHTN-07-2024-0127>

- Republic Act No. 10066. (2010). An act providing for the protection and conservation of the national cultural heritage, strengthening the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and its affiliated cultural agencies, and for other purposes (National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009). Congress of the Philippines. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2010/ra_10066_2010.html
- Republic Act No. 11961. (2023). An act strengthening the conservation and protection of Philippine cultural heritage through cultural mapping, amending for the purpose Republic Act No. 10066, otherwise known as the “National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009”. Congress of the Philippines. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2023/ra_11961_2023.html
- Richards, G., & King, B. (2022). The experience of cultural festivals: Evidence from Hong Kong. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 14(3), 296–309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2022.2033249>
- Rossetti, G., & Quinn, B. (2021). Understanding the cultural potential of rural festivals: A conceptual framework of cultural capital development. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 86, 46–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.05.009>
- Salem, I. E. (2026). Beyond the stage: How performing arts tourism shapes tourist perceptions and destination image. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 9(1), 375–396. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-04-2025-0467>
- Santos, D. F. P. J., Alas, J. Q., Celerinos, F. A. B., & Monderondo, E. N. R. (2026). From imagination to destination: The memoirs of victories and grapples of Mati City creative team toward tourism and cultural influx through Indak-Indak sa Kadayawan Festival. *International Journal of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives*, 2(5), 88–104. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21987939>
- Selim, G., & Farhan, S. L. (2024). Reactivating voices of the youth in safeguarding cultural heritage in Iraq: The challenges and tools. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 24(1), 58–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14696053231224037>
- Semmens, K. A., Carr, R. H., Maxfield, K., & Sickler, J. (2023). CREATE resilience through science, art, and community engagement. *Community Science*, 2(3), Article e2023CSJ000028. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2023CSJ000028>
- Smith, L.-S., Louw, Q. A., & Brink, Y. (2024). Fatigue and recovery in ballet: Exploring the experiences of professional South African ballet dancers. *BMC Sports Science, Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 16, Article 237. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13102-024-01026-w>
- Tan, Y.-C., Yang, L.-H., & Wang, B. (2026). Community-engaged digital safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage: A review of methods and challenges. *npj Heritage Science*, 14, Article 184. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s40494-026-02458-y>
- Thanapornsangsuth, S., Edler, K. L., Park, J., Takada, J.-I., & Yamaguchi, S. (2025). Intangible cultural heritage safeguarding: A youth-led community of practice in Lao People’s Democratic Republic. *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, 20, 159–179. <https://doi.org/10.35638/ijih.2025.1.20.011>
- UN-Habitat. (2023). Rescuing SDG 11 for a resilient urban planet: Synthesis report. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/07/sdg_11_synthesis_report_2023_final_0.pdf
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2023). Sustainable development and living heritage. *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development-and-living-heritage>
- Volkova, V. G., Räisänen, A., Benson, L. C., Ferber, R., & Kenny, S. J. (2023). Systematic review of methods used to measure training load in dance. *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*, 9(3), Article e001484. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjsem-2022-001484>
- Wight, A. C., & Victoria, M. (2022). ‘Hayan na ang mga hampas-dugo!’ (The penitents are coming!): Penitensya as religious-dark tourism. *Tourist Studies*, 22(1), 89–113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687976211067261>
- Wood, B. E., & Homolja, M. (2021). Strategic solidarities: Cultural festivals, relational encounters and diasporic youth identities. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 42(3), 377–393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2021.1939278>
- Xu, Y. (2024). Impact of cultural proximity on destination image and tourists’ perceptions: The case of the Portuguese cultural festival Lusofonia in Macao. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 30(1), 45–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667221117302>
- Yan, Q., Shen, H., Xin, W., & Ye, H. (2024). Examining the ritualized experiences of intangible cultural heritage tourism. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 31, Article 100843. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2023.100843>
- Zhang, Y., Ikiz Kaya, D., van Wesemael, P., & Colenbrander, B. J. F. (2024). Youth participation in cultural heritage management: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 30(1), 56–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2023.2275261>
- Zhang, Y., Zheng, Q., Huang, L., Lee, T. J., & Hyun, S. S. (2024). Alienation and authenticity in intangible cultural heritage tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 32(12), 2459–2478. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2023.2284642>