



Sociocultural Perspectives on Badjao Life Captured from the Lived Experiences of Badjao Teens in Surigao City: A Phenomenology

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ABSTRACT: This Husserlian phenomenological study explored the sociocultural perspectives on Badjao life of teens in Surigao City. Employing Van Kaam's phenomenology modified by Moustakas (1994), six key informants from the Badjao community (aged 15 to 19) in Canlanipa, Surigao City, were interviewed on their sociocultural experiences, yielding nine themes. Purposive sampling identified informants. Applying Van Kaam's modified by Moustakas for data analysis revealed significant findings: Cultural Transition and Urban Challenges, Social Stereotypes and Bullying, Judgement and Discrimination, Language and Communication Challenges, Community and Social Exclusion, Government Support for Education and Community, Community Resilience and Support, Badjao Community Dynamics, and Traditional Cultural Practices. The Badjao community's resilience relies on governmental support, education, and navigating cultural transitions. Facing discrimination and economic disparities, they strengthen social bonds, preserving cultural identity. Tradition meeting progress creates a harmonious future. The research amplifies Badjao teens' voices, aids Surigao City leaders in understanding their needs, boosts community pride, contributes to cultural understanding, enriches academic knowledge, refines cultural theories, empowers individuals, informs policies, and strengthens community well-being.

KEYWORDS: phenomenology, Moustakas, badjao, sociocultural, lived experiences, Surigao, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

About 350 million indigenous people live in over 70 countries across six continents, accounting for approximately 5 percent of the total world population, and represent more than 5000 languages and cultures (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2015). In the Philippines, indigenous people are the keepers of unique cultures, traditions, languages, and knowledge (UNDP, 2021). There are several indigenous groups in the Philippines and the focus of the study is towards the Badjao teens. The Badjaos are a sea-dwelling tribe, often known as the "Sea Nomads", who have been floating off the shores of Southeast Asia for centuries. As a nomadic tribe living in stilt huts or boat houses on shallow waters, they make their living from traditional free diving for fish and pearls (Valle, 2015).

In the Philippines, members of Badjao people specifically young teens were unable to read and write because they were not sent to school by their parents. They also live near waters and far from areas where schools are located. Poverty hinders their capability to go to school. Since they don't have money to buy their daily meals, pay transportation expenses, and purchase school uniforms and projects they quit schooling. Bullying is also a factor in why they stop attending classes. Badjao teens experience discrimination and self-fulfilling prophecy. They were tagged as slow learners, have poor hygiene, and have low emotional quotient. Because of a language barrier, they have difficulty interacting with other people and expressing their ideas and needs. They are always left out of learning academic subjects. They lack moral and financial support to continue their education. (Flestado, 2014)

Surigao City is one of those cities in the Philippines that is ample to Badjao tribe. According to Dator, et al. (2018), the Sama-badjao originated from southwestern Mindanao part of the Philippines before trying their luck in rural areas just like Surigao. In Surigao, the Badjao tribe usually gets their money by asking it from strangers and some are selling their self-made accessories.



Badjao young teens usually utilize their culture and use music to entertain people to gain money. They dance using hand-made drums and musical techniques for the success of their performance. In Brgy. Canlanipa, Surigao City, Badjaos are given free education sponsored by the government and some are even given free houses for them to settle and live in.

Badjaos are one of those indigenous groups that is still a question to the society because the study about them is limited. This gives the researchers curiosity letting them construct questions to explore more their perspectives about the society and their own culture. The researchers decided to conduct this phenomenological study to understand and find an answer to questions like who they are, what are their experiences in society, how the stereotyping by the people in society towards their group affects them and the way they live, and how they still able to continue living despite the standard of the society that restrains them from getting better opportunities. Getting those answers will give the researchers the knowledge to know the reality beyond those curiosities. These might help them change how society thinks about them and try to understand their ethical standards. Likewise, this study explored how the people of the Badjao community go on with their lifestyle, how they experience the world, and what their history and cultural norms. This topic would contribute to the community in a way that would give the researchers the idea and knowledge of how the people of the Badjao community lived especially the young teens and might change the perspective of the society towards their community.

Philosophical Underpinning

This Husserlian phenomenological study explored the sociocultural perspectives on Badjao life captured from the lived experiences of Badjao teens in Surigao City. In shaping our research, we draw upon the insightful Cultural Transition and Acculturation Theory, a significant contribution by John W. Berry (1997) in his influential paper "Acculturation as Varieties of Adaptation". This theory serves as a crucial framework, offering a nuanced understanding of how individuals navigate cultural transitions. Berry categorizes acculturation into four strategies—assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization—providing a valuable lens to explore how Badjao young teens adapt within the diverse urban landscape of Surigao City.

Berry's work, rooted in cross-cultural psychology, is particularly pertinent given the intricate dynamics within the Badjao community and the complex interplay of cultures in an urban setting. His framework not only enriches our theoretical foundation but also guides our exploration of the unique acculturation strategies employed by the Badjao youth.

Complementing this theoretical scaffold, we incorporate the Modified Van Kaam Approach, as articulated by Clark Moustakas in his influential work "Phenomenological Research Methods" (1994). This qualitative research method, an adaptation of the phenomenological approach, emphasizes a systematic exploration of lived experiences. Moustakas' insights guide us to suspend preconceptions, engaging in in-depth interviews and participant observation to capture the essence of the Badjao young teens' experiences during their cultural transition.

By merging Berry's well-established Cultural Transition and Acculturation Theory with Moustakas' Modified Van Kaam Approach, we strive to provide a holistic understanding of the Badjao youth's experiences in Surigao City. This integration enables us to delve deep into the intricate dynamics of cultural transition, identity formation, and social integration within the specific urban context. Our aim is not just theoretical enrichment but also to offer practical insights that can inform community engagement strategies and support programs tailored to the unique needs of the Badjao community in an urban environment.

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative Husserlian phenomenological research design employing Van Kaam's method modified by Moustakas (1994) exploring the sociocultural perspectives on Badjao life captured from the lived experiences of Badjao teens in Surigao City. Phenomenology was a suitable research design for studying cultural phenomena and gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of a particular group. By doing in-depth interviews with these Badjao teens, we captured the nuances, perspectives, and social dynamics that shape their experiences.



The key informants of this study were selected through purposive-convenience sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique where specific individuals are selected based on predefined criteria to meet the research objectives. On the other hand, convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where participants are chosen based on their accessibility and ease of inclusion in the study.

Purposive sampling was employed because of the following criteria:

- a) A Badjao who is a member of the Brgy. Canlanipa community;
- b) A Badjao who ages 15 to 19 years old;
- c) A Badjao who is still studying in school; and
- d) A Badjao who is willing to be interviewed by voluntary participation the study.

Convenience sampling was employed because of:

- a) The accessibility of the researchers and informants;
- b) Aiming to reduce expenses and save time in conducting the study; and
- c) Availability of the Badjao teens

To ensure acceptable data saturation, the topics of the study were communicated in such a way that they were sufficiently clear and ultimately specific. Here, the researcher strongly imposed that careful consideration of participant anonymity is an important aspect of qualitative research (Morse, 2000).

The research environment was in Surigao City. Surigao is recognized as the “City of Island Adventures” and the “Gateway to Mindanao”. It is the home of rich water and agricultural resources because of its provincial characteristics that are not so much urbanized and also not totally rural. Surigao City is the capital city of Surigao del Norte Province – one of the major provinces of Caraga Region in the big island of Mindanao, Philippines. The locale of the study was specifically in the area where the Badjao community is situated which is located in the heart of the City – Brgy. Canlanipa. Also, the data gathering happened in the community kiosk in Brgy. Canlanipa. Moreover, the researchers themselves were the instruments as they were the ones who gathered the data aided by a semi-structured interview guide as a tool for gathering responses from the informants.

A face-to-face interview was conducted to gather the necessary data for the informants, particularly their lived experiences. The interview guide used by the researchers included the use of researchers’ observations and field notes. In the preparation of the interview guide, the design requirements were considered:

1. What are the lived experiences of the Badjao teens in Surigao City?
2. What are the thoughts and feelings of the Badjao teens as they live daily in Surigao City?
3. What are the challenges experienced by the key informants as to their lived experiences?
4. What essence and meanings from the lived experiences can be derived?
5. Based on the outcomes of the inquiry, what implications may be drawn?

The researchers used coding by labeling them Informants B1 – Informant 1, B2 – Informant 2, B3– Informant 3, B4 – Informant 4, B5 – Informant 5, B6 – Informant 6, to ensure secrecy and privacy for the informants’ identity. Then, the researchers used open coding to organize the data being collected and to provide remarks based on their answers. Next to this is axial coding to breakdown the informants’ responses and to be able to provide more comprehensive and detailed analysis. Lastly, selective coding was used to find the core category to create a theory out of the data that the researchers gathered.

The immediate interview process was conducted in the homes of the informants, and in their community kiosk – whichever venue the informants felt more comfortable at. The collection of data in this study was done through in-depth interviews in order to gain deeper insights into their personal experiences, perceptions, challenges, and aspirations. These interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility and exploration of emerging themes while ensuring that key research questions are addressed. Interviews



were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis. The recorded responses were not sorted into categories or themes until all interviews were completed to avoid bias in directing interview questions toward certain themes. For phenomenological research, broad general questions were initially asked to generate informants' responses (Moustakas, 1994) evolving to more directional questions to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experience.

After gathering personal stories from Badjao teens through interviews and group discussions, responses were analyzed through the use of Van Kaam's method, modified by Moustakas in 1994, following eight rigorous steps. This approach helped us dig deep into the teens' experiences, uncover patterns, and distill core insights. We aim to authentically explore their challenges and aspirations, contributing valuable perspectives to understand their community dynamics. The eight steps of the data analysis method are as follows:

1. Listing and Preliminary Grouping. *Listing*: Create a detailed list of raw data, experiences, or elements related to the phenomenon under study; *Preliminary Grouping*: Organize the listed items into initial groups based on common characteristics, themes, or criteria. This helps in structuring the raw data for further analysis.
2. Reduction and Elimination. *Reduction*: Condense or summarize the data to focus on essential elements; *Elimination*: Remove redundant or less relevant information to streamline the dataset.
3. Clustering and Thematising the Invariant Constituents. *Clustering*: Group related elements together to identify patterns or connections; *Thematising*: Develop overarching themes that encapsulate the essence of the grouped elements.
4. Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application. *Final Identification*: Refine and finalize the identified invariant constituents and themes. *Application*: Understand how these constituents and themes apply to the overall research or the phenomenon being studied.
5. Construct an Individual Textural Description of the Experience. *Textural Description*: Develop a detailed, descriptive narrative of the experiences based on the identified constituents and themes.
6. Construct an Individual Structural Description of the Experience. *Structural Description*: Outline the structural aspects of the experiences, highlighting relationships, connections, or processes.
7. Construct a Textual Structural Description of the Meanings and Essences of the Experiences Incorporating the Invariant Constituents and Themes. *Textual Structural Description*: Integrate the textural and structural descriptions to capture the meanings and essences of the experiences. This involves providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding.
8. Composite Textural – Structural Descriptions. *Composite Description*: Combine the individual textual and structural descriptions into a cohesive and holistic representation of the experiences.

Therefore, Van Kaam's (1966) method as modified by Moustakas (1994) served as the appropriate analysis for the data gathered in the study.

To enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the study, several strategies were implemented. Member checks were conducted by sharing the findings with participants to validate interpretations and seek their feedback. Peer debriefing and consultation with experts in the field of ethnography were undertaken to ensure rigor in the research process. Triangulation of data sources, including observations, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, further strengthened the credibility and reliability of the study. Reflexivity was practiced by the researchers, acknowledging their role, biases, and potential influence on the research process and findings. In terms of the role of the researchers, the researchers are just near observers from the outside community so therefore, there are no biases of the researchers coming from the inside but the researchers also don't have the bias coming from the outside.

Ethical consideration can be manifested by avoiding any risk of considerably harming the informants unnecessarily. We avoided the use of deception on people participating. We also obtained informed consent from all involved in the study. Also, the ethical consideration was made possible by preserving privacy and confidentiality whenever possible (Ederio, et al., 2023).



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Included in this part is a detailed phenomenological analysis of interviews with the Badjao informants. Informants completed the face-to-face interviews as the researchers interviewed in the informants' place. Responses to research questions were diverse because of the informants' different experiences, cultures, and languages. From the coding of the interview transcriptions, common themes emerged regarding the experience of Badjao teens in Surigao City.

The eight interview questions centered on the research questions: (1) Can you share your experiences as a young Badjao teen living and roaming in Surigao City? (2) How do you perceive urban environment compared to your traditional nomadic lifestyle? (3) What specific challenges do you encounter while navigating life in Surigao City as a young Badjao member? (4) How do you strive to preserve your cultural identity while residing in an urban setting like Surigao City? (5) Are there any cultural practices or traditions that hold particular significance for you? (6) How do you interact with members of the Badjao community and others in Surigao City? (7) What opportunities for education have you had in Surigao City, and how do they compare to your previous experiences? (8) Have there been any obstacles or advantages in pursuing education in the urban context?

We used the modified method of Van Kaam as described by Moustakas (1994) for data analysis. We found this eight-steps approach effective in organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the qualitative data gathered. The interviews covered a period of within 4 hours on September 23, 2023. We carefully and consciously set aside past observations and viewed the experiences as fresh and new. We, who currently reside in Surigao City too, did not use the study as an opportunity to fetch pertinent data that could be personally and technically beneficial to our interests nor as an opportunity to use the collected data against anyone such as to report for disciplinary actions the informants who have possibly expressed or shared about their negative experiences. We also had my observation and field notes that allowed us to record the notable demeanor and gestures of the informants during the actual interview session. These field notes were our documentation of events, conversations, and behaviors observed in the field, as well as our simple and short reflections on them. With this, we were able to interpret the data objectively.

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The findings are presented in a narrative format, exploring each theme, and encompassing both core themes and sub-themes.

Core Theme 1: Cultural Transition and Dynamics

As dawn breaks over the city of Surigao, our journey into the lives of Badjao teens unfolds, guided by the theme of "Cultural Transition and Dynamics." In the vibrant marketplaces and within the walls of schools, we connect not just through words but by looking into their eyes and deciphering the unspoken language that reveals the struggles of these teenagers. Their eyes, like open books, tell stories of challenges faced in adapting to a new setting. We sense the weight they carry, the delicate balancing act between honoring their cultural roots and navigating the demands of an unfamiliar world.

Amidst the hustle and bustle, we observe the nuances of their non-verbal cues—a silent dialogue of resilience and determination. The unspoken narratives etched in their expressions become a symphony, portraying the hurdles of cultural transition. They expressed that as nomadic people, they adapt to different cultures, accept some, and reject aspects of their own culture. Despite these experiences, they remain happy to be called Badjaos. Every aspect of society needs inclusivity, and indigenous people like the Badjaos need to be empowered for their community to advance (Samonteza, 2019).

Our research paper becomes a vessel not just for information but for the silent struggles etched in the eyes of these Badjao teens. Through phenomenology, we delve into their world, where the narrative transforms into a melody that encapsulates the beauty and challenges of their journey. "Cultural Transition and Dynamics" isn't just a theme; it's a heartfelt story where the struggles reflected in their eyes add a layer of depth to the harmonious dance of tradition and adaptation.



Sub-Theme 1: Cultural Transition and Urban Challenges

As we talked with them, we can see the sadness in their eyes, telling stories of the tough experiences they've faced in the city. Their eyes reveal the harsh reality these teens deal with every day. It's more than just words – it's the weight of their experiences, etched in the lines of their faces. This paints a clear picture of how challenging urban life can be for these strong teens.

In the midst of this urban landscape, Informant 5's words resonate as a poignant illustration of the struggles faced in adapting to city life. *"It's not difficult in our area because I know many people here, so I can interact with them without being judged,"* they share, underscoring the refuge found in familiar surroundings. However, the urban challenges reveal a harsher reality. The city, vibrant and dynamic, sometimes becomes a battlefield where cultural differences are weaponized, leaving scars on the souls of the Badjao teens.

The urban jungle tests their resilience daily. Due to their poor hygiene, they are bullied often. This is because of the absence of proper comfort rooms and a source of water (Flestad, 2014). But, despite taunts like "Badjao, stinky Badjao," the teens exhibit remarkable strength, avoiding conflict and choosing to walk away from the judgmental battleground. Their journey in this new culture is a testament to their unwavering spirit and determination to preserve their cultural identity in the face of urban winds that threaten to extinguish it.

Amidst the concrete and steel, the Badjao teens stand as silent warriors, their stories etched in the footprints they leave on the city's pavement. Each step speaks of triumphs and tribulations, affirming their resilience as they shape their narrative against the backdrop of cultural transition and urban challenges. The city may test them, but within its towering shadows, the Badjao teens find the strength to be both ambassadors of their heritage and resilient individuals forging their path in the urban landscape.

Sub-Theme 2: Language and Communication Challenges

In the heart of Surigao City, we took a closer look at the hidden struggles Badjao teens face in their everyday interactions, particularly in language and communication. During our candid talks and interviews, one Badjao teen shared a poignant insight, saying, *"We experienced the difficulty of interacting with other people because sometimes they don't understand what we're saying."* This heartfelt statement serves as a powerful lens into their world. They feel the language barrier whenever they interact with people, and that is why it is difficult for these Badjao teens to communicate effectively with others since they don't possess the same language (Geyrozaga & Dungog-Cuizon, 2021). This shows how they struggle with interacting with people, which gives them the feeling of not being heard and understood.

In the lively marketplace, where stories are usually freely exchanged, these teens found themselves navigating the translation between their native language and the unfamiliar city dialect. Despite earnest attempts to share their experiences, the depth of their cultural heritage encountered the hurdle of being truly grasped. In the calm of classrooms, our close observations revealed a nuanced struggle to fully comprehend certain aspects of our questions.

Through the unspoken language of hesitant pauses and searching eyes, a silent narrative unfolded, illustrating the challenges they faced. In these quiet struggles, we recognized that their journey surpassed the mere adaptation to a new environment; it symbolized their resilience and strength in dealing with the intricacies of language. The Badjao teens, through their silent expressions, showcased the potency of their distinct voices, determined to resonate beyond the cultural confines surrounding them.

Sub-Theme 3: Badjao Community Dynamics

Seated in a side chair inside their barangay kiosk, we observed a captivating scene. People of various ages were engaged in different activities – Badjao kids immersed in playful games, teenagers sharing life stories with smiles on their faces, and adults bonding through lively conversations. Some were also involved in selling products to make a living. It became evident that this Badjao community genuinely connected with one another, showcasing a sense of unity. As we interviewed them, our interactions



with the vibrant Badjao teens uncovered a lively narrative shaped by their unique experiences. These teens emerged as storytellers, spinning tales that resonated within their homes and echoed through the vibrant spaces they occupied.

Interviewing them unveils a tapestry of community dynamics. The Badjao teens showcase not only their individual perspectives but also the tight bonds within their community. Friendliness, understanding, and a deep familiarity characterize their interactions, highlighting the unique fabric of their community. In the face of difficulties, whether it's about living conditions or earning the respect they deserve, they maintain an incredibly positive and uplifting perspective on life. Their actions are driven by a deep sense of care for one another, all with the shared aim of building a brighter future for their families and community. It's like being part of an exceptionally close-knit family where everyone looks out for each other, fostering a strong sense of interconnectedness and support that is truly remarkable (O'Callaghan, 2018).

Within the lively marketplace of Canlanipa, the teens navigate the bustling scenes with a spirit mirroring the ebb and flow of the tides. Their interactions, infused with the richness of their cultural heritage, form the backbone of a community in constant dialogue with its surroundings. These dynamics reflect the challenges faced and the resilience of Badjao teens as they carve out their space within the intricate fabric of Surigao City.

This narrative is a snapshot of strength, adaptability, and shared experiences, illustrating a generation's journey through the cultural currents in the heart of Surigao City. The sub-theme "Badjao Community and Dynamics" comes alive, portraying the teens as ambassadors of understanding, friendliness, and the deep bonds that define Canlanipa's lively community life.

Sub-Theme 4: Traditional Cultural Practices and Expression

In the lively streets of Surigao City, we stumbled upon the enchanting world of "Traditional Cultural Practices and Expression," where the spirited Badjao teens took the spotlight. Picture this – a marketplace alive with energy, where these teens, armed with homemade drums, turned everyday spaces into a canvas for their cultural tales.

As the beats echoed through the crowd, it wasn't just about music; it was a heartbeat, a rhythmic dance that spoke volumes about who they were as Badjaos. *Informant 1* painted the picture perfectly, saying, "By playing the drums, we can truly showcase who we are as Badjaos." In this vibrant street theater, the drums weren't just instruments; they were storytellers narrating tales of resilience and cultural pride.

The marketplace transformed into a living stage, with Badjao teens inviting everyone to join their lively narrative. It wasn't just a show; it was a conversation where tradition harmonized with the beats of city life.

Beyond earning a living, these teens became cultural ambassadors, weaving the pulse of their heritage into the very fabric of Surigao City. Their drumbeats weren't just sounds; they were echoes of a rich story, bridging the gap between their roots and the diverse tapestry of the urban landscape.

In the realm of traditional performing art, traditional knowledge, and traditional handicrafts, the Badjao teens showcase an evolution of social characteristics. Their performances reflect not just a cultural legacy but the embodiment of amiable, mild-mannered, brave, and peace-loving individuals (Saddalani & Yahcob-Saddalani, 2019). As they play their drums and share their stories, the Badjao teens embody not only a celebration of their heritage but a living testament to the harmonious coexistence of tradition and the contemporary world.

Core Theme 2: Social Challenges and Resilience

Deep within the Badjao community, life unfolds as a daily struggle, especially when they navigate the complexities of the city. The impact of these challenges is reflected in the eyes of the Badjao, telling stories of a tough reality they face every single day.



In our talks with them, the essence of "social challenges and resilience" becomes apparent. The city, despite its promises, subjects these enthusiastic Badjao teens to difficulties including stereotypes, judgment, bullying, and discrimination, and their community is struggling with an excessive household population and low income (Abelgas L., 2018). Their hunger for learning and exploration is stifled by the way society treats them, denying them the rights they deserve as students. As we converse, stories of school bullying emerge—instances where they're treated like outsiders. One informant's tears lay bare the cruelty they endure.

Despite these challenges, the Badjao people find strength within themselves. They've grown used to the prejudice but refuse to let it dictate their lives. Their community becomes a pillar of support, a tight-knit group that stands strong through life's trials. Witnessing one of them cry, only to be comforted by a fellow Badjao, speaks volumes about the deep love and solidarity within their community. Despite enduring hardships, their unity remains unbroken, always ready to rise and restart.

Sub-Theme 1: Experience Social Stereotypes and Bullying within the City

In the moments we spent talking with the Badjao teens, a mix of emotions surfaced. Their eyes, tinged with curiosity, hinted at a world unaccustomed to genuine interest. One teen honestly shared, *"I'm not used to being treated right and respected by someone like you."* Her words struck a chord, highlighting the stark contrast between the warmth they deserve and the harsh realities they face.

This sentiment deepened as we heard from *Informant 2*. Their pain was palpable as they revealed, *"I'm often bullied at school because I'm a Badjao... They always tease me, saying I smell bad, even though I always take a bath. There was a time when my classmates took pictures of me and sent them to the group chat just to make fun of me."*

These teens face discrimination and prejudice. They are often marginalized and excluded from society. What *Informant 2* said shows how they face discrimination in education and society, which is the reason why these teens lose interest in going to school and adults are often unable to find work (Human Rights Watch, 2011). These heartbreaking stories lay bare the cruelty that echoes through the school halls for these Badjao teens. The weight of societal prejudice becomes more profound as we witness not only their struggle against derogatory labels but also the indignity of being objectified and ridiculed. It's tough to realize that, for these teens, going to school isn't just about learning but also dealing with hurtful stereotypes and bullying. As we hear their stories, a strong theme of resilience starts to unfold. It illustrates the determination of these teens to stand tall despite the torrents of prejudice. The curiosity in their eyes transforms into a silent plea for understanding, kindness, and a world that recognizes their worth beyond the confines of stereotypes. The interviews become a powerful vessel, carrying their voices and experiences beyond the pages, urging society to confront biases and champion the right of every individual to be treated with dignity and respect.

Sub-Theme 2: Being Judged and Discriminated

Walking along Surigao City's boulevard, we couldn't help but notice Badjao teens trying to get by—asking for food, playing instruments, and simply going about their day. But what struck us was the discrimination and judgment they faced. This raised a burning question in our minds: What are their real experiences?

During our interviews, it hit home that our observations weren't just fleeting impressions. These teens genuinely grapple with the heavy burden of society's judgment and discrimination. The sadness in their eyes spoke volumes, revealing the deep scars left by these hurtful experiences. It became clear that these encounters shape not only how they see the world but also how they perceive themselves.

Informant 3's words drove this point home: *"Then, when we walk by, they just label us as 'dirty people' because we are Badjao, and it hurts me that they think and say such things about us."* These words cut deep, showing the emotional toll of being unfairly branded. As part of the Badjao community that lives in urban environments, it just shows how often they face prejudice and stereotypes, and they are particularly vulnerable to bullying and discrimination (Villanueva-Amir, 2021). It's more than just



people looking at them in a certain way; it's about how those judgments burrow deep inside, affecting how they feel about themselves.

As we dig into their stories, a powerful tale emerges—one of strength as they face tough times head-on. These teens navigate a world where judgment and discrimination become unwelcome companions, yet they stand strong, challenging these preconceptions as they move through the city.

Sub-Theme 3: Community and Social Exclusion

In the heart of Surigao City, we see a powerful story unfold around the theme of "Community and Social Exclusion." As we become part of their world, it's clear that these Badjao teens are grappling not only with the complexities of city life but also with the isolating force of social exclusion.

Roaming through their neighborhoods, we witness these teens going about their daily activities. However, underneath the surface lies a poignant reality—social exclusion, a tough undercurrent that shapes their everyday experiences. The words of *Informant 5* hit hard: "At school, my classmates always bully me, and it feels like they just don't want me around." These words expose the deep loneliness these teens feel in places where acceptance should be a given. This makes them feel marginalized and discriminated against by the dominant societal groups, which makes them consider themselves to be societal outcasts (Abelgas, 2018).

In the vibrant tapestry of community life, the exclusion these teens endure becomes painfully evident. Whether intentional or not, society sends a message that they don't belong, that their presence is unwelcome. The echoes of exclusion reverberate through every interaction, making it clear that the journey to genuine connection is hindered by societal biases.

As we explore their stories, a narrative unfolds—one rooted in the resilience of these teens. They navigate the intricate dance of community and exclusion, yearning for acceptance in a world that often overlooks them. The challenge they face is not just about city living; it's profoundly human, touching the core of their identity and their desire to break free from the chains of exclusion, to find a place where they are not merely present but truly belong.

Sub-Theme 4: Community Resilience and Support

In Surigao City, where the Badjao community grapples with life's hardships, a powerful story of "Community Resilience and Support" unfolds. Stepping into their world, you can see a mix of emotions in their eyes — the weight of tough realities reflected in sadness, yet underneath, there's a smile that speaks volumes about their mutual support and love.

As we observe them, we witness a community that doesn't buckle under the weight of challenges. Despite facing numerous hurdles, the Badjao community stands strong, confronting each obstacle with a shared determination. They also developed a number of coping mechanisms, such as humor, storytelling, and religious practices, to help them deal with stress and adversity (Villanueva-Amir & Estores, 2022). Their smiles go beyond mere expressions of joy; they symbolize an unyielding spirit that binds them together.

In the midst of tales of struggle, a poignant story emerges — the aftermath of Typhoon Odette, a destructive force that took a toll on their homes. What shines through in this tough time is the Badjao community's remarkable unity. They come together to rebuild what was lost, showcasing a deep communal strength that goes beyond physical structures.

This theme reveals a community that doesn't just survive; it thrives through collective resilience. The tough times they go through aren't roadblocks but rather parts of the intricate story of their lives. Together, they weave these challenges into the fabric of their existence, binding them with shared smiles, love, and a deep sense of mutual support. Whether facing metaphorical or real storms, the Badjao community doesn't crumble; instead, they stand strong, showcasing the incredible strength that comes from unity and unwavering support in overcoming life's hardest moments.



Core Theme 3: Governmental Support and Education

As we step into their world, the impact of government aid becomes a ray of hope, brightening their journey towards a better future. With the Philippine government implementing a number of programs to support their education, though these programs have been met with mixed success we still encounter Badjao teens with eyes that reflect a newfound hope (Enriquez, 2022). Government support becomes a lifeline, enabling them to continue their education. Fueled by aspirations, these teens confidently make their way to school, where the promise of a brighter life awaits.

Government assistance goes beyond mere promises, taking tangible forms. The provision of school supplies and financial aid for education serves as a catalyst for change. These tools empower the Badjao teens not only academically but also in their quest to enhance their way of living. Education becomes the cornerstone of a promising tomorrow, offering not just knowledge but also the skills needed to navigate life's complexities.

In the classrooms, the Badjao teens aren't merely absorbing information from textbooks; they are soaking in the essence of transformation. The support they receive opens doors to new skills, allowing them to redefine their narratives. As they grasp the intricacies of various subjects, a sense of empowerment blossoms within them, breaking the chains of limitations that once confined their dreams.

The hope ignited by governmental support glows in the eyes of these teens. It's a flame that fuels their determination to rise above circumstances and carve a path to success. With every lesson learned and skill acquired, they rewrite their destinies, transforming into individuals who not only dream but also possess the tools to turn those dreams into reality. As the Badjao teens continue their educational journey, the impact of governmental support resonates throughout their community. It's more than just each person progressing; it's about all of us rising together, creating a positive ripple that opens up endless possibilities. The essence of "Governmental Support and Education" isn't just a personal journey; it's a shared narrative of hope. With the right support, education becomes a guiding light, paving the way for a brighter future not just for the Badjao teens but for their entire community.

Sub-Theme 1: Government Support for Education and Community

In the heart of the Badjao community, what keeps them standing strong is a powerful blend of hope and support. This support emanates from within their community and extends through the helping hand of the government. It's not just a tale of distant aspirations; it's a real narrative where hope is a palpable force, fueled by the unwavering support that binds each person together. As we dive into the lives of the Badjao teens, their story unfolds, painting a picture of resilience and unity woven from these two essential sources of strength.

Informant 1 eloquently puts it, "The government always provides us with school supplies and rice to help us in our difficulties, and in school, if there are fees, the government takes care of them, so we don't have to pay." This statement captures the concrete support these teens receive, not only in their academic endeavors but also in their everyday challenges.

Despite facing economic hardships, a prevailing sense of hope thrives within the Badjao community. With the government helping the Badjao families with their daily needs by giving them financial aid, they see hope for opportunities. Aside from monetary aid, the government also provides scholarships, trainings, and seminars for them to learn life skills and apply these learnings as a way to earn more and succeed in life (Geyrozaga & Dungog-Cuizon, 2021). They find comfort and optimism because of the consistent support from the government. This support isn't just lip service; it translates into meaningful actions. During calamities, the government steps in, supplying essential goods to help them rebuild their lives.

Education, too, undergoes a transformation through this support. The government shoulders the burden of school fees, ensuring financial constraints don't hinder the pursuit of knowledge for the Badjao teens. Moreover, the provision of school supplies becomes a powerful tool, empowering them to actively engage in learning and breaking down barriers imposed by poverty.



As we navigate through the stories of the Badjao community, a vivid picture emerges — a community fortified by the unwavering support of the government. It's more than rhetoric; it's a symbiotic relationship where the government becomes a beacon of hope for a community facing adversity. The provision of goods during calamities, covering school fees, and supplying school materials not only uplift individuals but also strengthen the very fabric of the Badjao community.

In essence, the sub-theme of "Government Support for Education and Community" paints a narrative of collaboration and hope. It shows that, despite challenges and economic hardships, the government plays a crucial role in supporting the Badjao community. It highlights that nobody is forgotten, especially when it comes to the overall welfare of the community.

CONCLUSION AND GENERALIZATION

Undoubtedly, the multifaceted examination of the Badjao community encompasses themes of governmental support and education, social challenges and resilience, and cultural transition and dynamics. The progress and well-being of the Badjao tribe are intrinsically linked to the concerted efforts of governmental bodies, community resilience, and the complexities of cultural adaptation. Governmental support and education initiatives play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of the Badjao community. By addressing social challenges through the provision of essential services, promoting education, and safeguarding cultural rights, governments contribute to the empowerment and sustainable development of the Badjao people. These efforts are vital for fostering a more inclusive society that recognizes and values the unique contributions of the Badjao tribe. Simultaneously, the Badjao community faces social challenges that demand resilience and adaptive strategies. Economic disparities, discrimination, and cultural shifts pose hurdles that require both individual and collective resilience. Strengthening social bonds, leveraging cultural identity, and cultivating coping mechanisms are crucial components in navigating and overcoming these challenges, contributing to the overall resilience of the community. Cultural transition and dynamics further shape the narrative of the Badjao tribe, as they navigate changes in their traditional ways of life. The process of acculturation involves not only adapting to new cultural norms but also preserving and celebrating their rich heritage. As the Badjao people undergo cultural transitions, maintaining a delicate balance between embracing change and preserving their identity becomes paramount for the sustainable coexistence of tradition and progress. In essence, the holistic understanding of the Badjao community requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the interplay between governmental support, social challenges, resilience, and cultural dynamics. As stakeholders continue to collaborate, respecting the autonomy and agency of the Badjao people, there exists the potential for a harmonious integration of modernity and tradition, ultimately contributing to the thriving and resilient future of the Badjao tribe.

Reflection

Exploring the lives of Badjao teens in Surigao City became more than just a school project for us. It turned into a journey that needed our time, persistence, and a joint commitment to make a difference. Working together on this meant late nights, visits to each other's homes, and balancing schoolwork. Even with challenges, the satisfaction of contributing to our community made every difficulty worthwhile.

Before our formal study, we were curious about the struggles faced by Badjao teens. We wanted to dive into their everyday lives and aspirations, not just complete an assignment. Our research became a mission to bring attention to those often ignored by society. As we learned about Badjao lives, we saw these teens as more than numbers. They were individuals with dreams, facing unique challenges. Our focus shifted from regular research to sharing real-life stories. Late nights and frustrations weren't roadblocks but important parts of our changing journey.

Talking to Badjao teens was intense. Their stories went beyond facts, leaving a deep impact on us. They weren't just research subjects; they became the heroes of stories that needed to be heard. Starting our research felt like riding a roller coaster – discovering new things mixed with facing tough realities. Overcoming challenges wasn't just about finishing our school tasks; it showed our commitment to creating positive change in our community.



Our research went beyond the paper; it connected what we learned in class to the real world. We wanted to influence policies, create empathy in the community, and contribute to understanding different cultures. The Badjao teens trusted us with their stories, and our duty went beyond research to advocating for a kinder and more informed society. Finishing our research wasn't just the end of a school project; it was the start of a shared story. The tiredness and stress became symbols of our dedication to understanding the Badjao community and growing as individuals determined to make a positive impact.

As we finish this chapter, we see ourselves not just as researchers but as advocates for empathy and positive change. The stories of the Badjao teens are now a shared example of resilience. Our responsibility is to make sure these stories reach society, creating a more understanding and compassionate community. The journey was tough, but the lasting impact on each of us is beyond measure.

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