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PHILIPPINE LITERATURE TEXTBOOKS AS MEANS OF REPRESENTING CULTURAL ARTIFACTS IN MINDANAO: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how Mindanaoan cultural artifacts are represented in Philippine literature textbooks used in higher education institutions. It identified the dominant artifacts included, assessed the inclusiveness of their representation, and determined how these shaped students' cultural awareness. Thirteen textbooks authored by Mindanaoan writers were analyzed, supported by interviews with student participants. A qualitative content analysis guided by Narrative Theory (Bruner, 1991), Multicultural Education Theory (Banks, 2004), and Cultural Representation Theory (Hall, 1997) was employed.

Findings showed that only one textbook contained substantial cultural materials such as folktales, myths, epics, proverbs, and indigenous practices. Most textbooks offered limited or no local cultural content, reinforcing exclusion and stereotyping. Students reported that textbooks with local narratives fostered stronger engagement, identity formation, and motivation. Conversely, texts dominated by Luzon-centric and Western content weakened cultural connection and interest.

The results emphasize the need for inclusive literature textbooks that affirm regional identities. Integrating Mindanaoan culture promotes meaningful learning, strengthens cultural pride, and contributes to educational equity. The study supports curriculum reform and the involvement of local writers, educators, and cultural experts in textbook development to ensure authentic representation of Mindanaoan traditions.

KEYWORDS: *Philippine Literature, Cultural Representation, Mindanaoan Artifacts, Qualitative Content Analysis, Inclusive Pedagogy*

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks shape how learners perceive culture and identity. In the Philippines, literature textbooks frequently prioritize Tagalog and Luzon-centered narratives while marginalizing regional voices, particularly from Mindanao (Java, 2024; Godinez-Ortega, 2024). This imbalance limits learners' access to diverse cultural heritage and undermines the goal of inclusive education. Mindanaoan traditions such as the Darangen epic, T'boli weaving, and Maguindanaon proverbs remain underrepresented, leading to stereotypes and cultural distance in classrooms (Sampang et al., 2025).

Scholars highlight the need for textbooks that affirm cultural diversity and promote equity (Banks, 2004; Cabanilla & Villanueva, 2024). This study addresses the gap by examining how Mindanaoan cultural artifacts are represented in Philippine literature textbooks, whether these representations are inclusive, and how they influence learners' cultural awareness.

Objectives

The study aimed to:

- Identify the dominant cultural artifacts in Philippine literature textbooks used in Mindanao.
- Examine the inclusiveness of Mindanaoan cultural representations.
- Determine how these representations contribute to students' cultural awareness.

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Methodology

A qualitative content analysis was conducted on thirteen textbooks authored by Mindanaoan writers and used in higher education institutions across Mindanao. Semi-structured interviews with ten students complemented the document analysis. Thematic coding, following Braun and Clarke (2021), was applied to identify recurring cultural artifacts and assess inclusivity. Narrative Theory (Bruner, 1991), Multicultural Education Theory (Banks, 2004), and Cultural Representation Theory (Hall, 1997) guided interpretation.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was employed. Thirteen textbooks were selected for their relevance to Philippine literature instruction. Ten student participants from five colleges were invited to provide insights on how textbook content shaped their engagement and cultural awareness.

Statistical Design

As a qualitative inquiry, the study did not employ statistical tools. Analysis focused on systematic coding and interpretation of cultural representations.

Geographical Area

The research was conducted in Mindanao, a culturally diverse island that is home to Lumad, Moro, and settler communities. The geographical context is crucial, as the study examined whether textbooks used in Mindanao reflected its rich cultural heritage.

RESULTS

Table 1: Profile of the Research Materials

The analysis of thirteen textbooks revealed uneven representation of cultural artifacts, with most materials emphasizing skills-based learning while only one systematically included Mindanaoan stories, traditions, and practices. The following tables present the key findings and their implications.

Code	Title of the Book	Key Feature
GE-BK01	The Literatures of the Philippines	Includes folktales, epics, legends, proverbs, and indigenous practices
GE-BK02–GE-BK13	Communication, reading, and writing textbooks	Skills-based focus with minimal or no cultural stories

The dataset consisted of thirteen textbooks (Table 1). Only GE-BK01 contained substantial cultural artifacts, while the remaining texts primarily targeted communication, writing, or reading comprehension. Although authored by Mindanaoan writers, most did not prioritize regional stories. This reflects a wider curricular imbalance, where literature is often displaced by functional communication skills.

The lack of cultural artifacts in twelve of the books reduces students' opportunities to encounter their heritage. This pattern confirms the persistence of centralized textbook design, where Luzon-based or Western literary models dominate. The implications are critical: without authentic representation, students risk developing fragmented understandings of national literature that undervalue Mindanao's contributions.

Table 2: Dominant Artifacts in Philippine Literature Textbooks in Mindanao

Artifact Type	Examples in Texts	Description
Folktales	*Indarapatra and Sulayman*, *The Monkey and the Turtle*, *The Story of the First Durian*	Oral stories teaching morality, resilience, and survival
Epics	*Darangen*, *Bidasari*	Narratives of heroism, identity, and cultural values
Legends	*How Cagayan de Oro Got Its Name*, *Legend of Mount Cotabato*, *Signs of the Planting Season*, *The Origin of Davao*, *Legend of Ango*, *How Angels Built Lake Lanao*	Stories linking places with history, spirituality, and morality
Proverbs	Ilocano, Cebuano, and Mindanaoan proverbs	Short sayings transmitting values such as respect, patience, and gratitude
Indigenous Practices	Rituals, weaving, oral traditions	Social and spiritual practices affirming identity and cooperation
Indigenous Arts	T'nalak weaving, kulintang	Tangible expressions of creativity and symbolism

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Discussion

Dominant artifacts in the textbooks were primarily folktales and proverbs, which emerged as the most common inclusions, though often presented superficially. Stories such as *Indarapatra and Sulayman* and *The Monkey and the Turtle* were repeatedly featured, transmitting values of courage, intelligence, and harmony with nature. However, these were frequently detached from their original cultural contexts, reducing their depth and meaning. Legends also played a notable role in linking students to place and memory. Narratives like the *Legend of Mount Cotabato* and *How Angels Built Lake Lanao* emphasized the sacredness of landscapes, connecting geography to spirituality and communal identity. Yet, these were often reduced to mere entertainment rather than appreciated as cultural frameworks. By contrast, epics such as the *Darangen*—a UNESCO-recognized masterpiece—were included only sparingly. Their limited coverage overlooked the richness of Maranao heritage and their potential to cultivate pride in local traditions. Similarly, indigenous practices such as weaving and rituals, while acknowledged, were treated superficially, missing opportunities for deeper cultural engagement. The findings confirm that while cultural artifacts exist in textbooks, their representation remains selective, fragmented, and shallow. This imbalance reinforces cultural marginalization rather than fostering inclusive understanding of Mindanao's diverse heritage.

Table 3: Inclusive Representation of Mindanaoan Culture

Artifact Type	Sample Artifacts	Inclusive Representation
Folktales	*Mandaya Oman-oman (Buyag na Butingin)*, *Maguindanao Tale of the Faithful Wife*, *Pilandok's Tale*	Highlight respect, loyalty, and wit as values for survival and resilience.
Indigenous Practices & Arts	*Dura* (Bagobo oral poetry), *T'nalak Weaving* (T'boli), Bukidnon rituals	Preserve spirituality, ecological harmony, and creativity tied to heritage.
Proverbs	*Sekkaw warad tavod du-buyyag*, *Panonggelangan*, *Masaalla*	Transmit parental respect, reciprocity, and moral responsibility.
Myths & Epics	*Limokon* (Mandaya), *Radia Indarapatra* (Maranao), *Ag Tobig nog Keboklagan* (Subanen), *Darangen* (Maranao)	Reinforce heroism, fate, justice, and identity; preserve collective memory.
Legends	*How Cagayan de Oro Got Its Name*, *Signs of the Planting Season*, *The Origin of Davao*, *Legend of Mount Cotabato*	Connect landscapes with spirituality, community pride, and ecological wisdom.

Discussion

The artifacts in Table 3 illustrate that Mindanaoan culture is represented across multiple forms—folktales, proverbs, epics, myths, legends, and indigenous practices. Folktales like *Pilandok* highlight wit and resilience, while proverbs safeguard family and communal values. Epics such as the *Darangen* embody Maranao heroism and cultural pride, whereas indigenous practices and arts like *T'nalak* weaving and *Dura* oral poetry reflect spirituality, creativity, and continuity. Legends, on the other hand, connect places with spirituality and ecological knowledge, reinforcing cultural identity tied to the land.

However, patterns of representation reveal a deeper issue. Mindanaoan culture was often excluded or depicted in stereotypical ways, reinforcing marginalization. Only one textbook demonstrated comprehensive and authentic inclusion of local narratives, while most treated cultural elements superficially. This uneven representation limits the potential of literature textbooks to foster inclusive education and affirm Mindanaoan identity.

Table 4: Cultural Awareness Developed Through Representations

Artifact	Values Highlighted	Cultural Awareness Outcomes
Folktales	*Respect for elders, cleverness, loyalty*	Ethical guidance and cultural memory
Legends	*Peace, unity, communal memory*	Belonging and place-based identity
Epics	*Resilience, destiny, harmony*	Pride in heritage, moral courage
Proverbs	*Gratitude, patience, responsibility*	Practical wisdom for daily life
Indigenous Practices	*Cooperation, spirituality*	Communal identity and continuity

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Discussion

Students consistently reported that local cultural stories deepened their cultural awareness. Reading epics such as *Indarapatra and Sulayman* or the *Darangen* instilled pride in heritage and affirmed their sense of belonging. Legends like *The Origin of Davao* helped them recognize their localities not only as geographical spaces but also as cultural landmarks imbued with meaning. By contrast, when Western texts such as *Romeo and Juliet* or Tagalog-centered classics dominated the curriculum, students described the lessons as distant and irrelevant. This disconnect weakened their engagement and limited their cultural identification with the material. Learner perspectives further highlight this contrast: students expressed that textbooks containing local narratives enhanced engagement, strengthened identity formation, and increased motivation, while Luzon-centric and Western-dominated content was perceived as less meaningful to their lived experiences.

Suggestions

To address the gaps identified in the study, several measures are recommended. First, collaboration among textbook developers, local writers, and cultural experts should be encouraged to ensure that instructional materials authentically reflect Mindanaoan traditions. Equally important is the provision of training programs for teachers on culturally responsive pedagogy, equipping them with strategies to integrate local content meaningfully into classroom instruction. Curriculum policies should also be revised to mandate regional representation, guaranteeing that the cultural heritage of Mindanao is not marginalized in national educational frameworks. Finally, the promotion and adoption of community-authored and validated educational materials are vital, as these resources uphold authenticity and strengthen the connection between learners and their cultural roots.

Conclusion

The study shows that cultural representation in Philippine literature textbooks is still uneven. Many of the textbooks reviewed either gave very little attention to Mindanaoan traditions or presented them in a shallow way. This lack of inclusion contributes to the continued marginalization of Mindanao's rich cultural heritage. When learners encounter their own stories, traditions, and practices in textbooks, they do not only gain knowledge but also develop pride in their identity and a deeper connection to their roots. Textbooks that reflect students' lived experiences make lessons more engaging and meaningful, encouraging both academic growth and cultural awareness. To address the gaps, it is important to push for curriculum reforms that ensure fair representation of all regions. Equally important is the development of inclusive textbooks that are grounded in local voices—those of Mindanaoan writers, educators, and cultural experts—so that the materials become authentic, relatable, and empowering for learners.

Area for Further Research

This study opens doors for more explorations. Future researchers may look into how teachers themselves integrate cultural content into their lessons and what strategies they use to fill the gaps left by textbooks. Comparative studies across other Philippine regions could also be conducted to see whether similar issues of underrepresentation exist in Luzon, Visayas, or other parts of Mindanao. In addition, pilot projects that test the use of locally authored and community-validated textbooks would be valuable in understanding their impact on students' cultural awareness and academic performance. These future directions will help strengthen efforts to make Philippine education more inclusive, balanced, and representative of the nation's diverse heritage.

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