

# Harmony in Diversity: MAPEH Teachers on Cultural Preservation Among Learners in Sarangani District

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**Abstract:** This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) teachers in promoting cultural preservation among learners in culturally diverse classrooms in the Sarangani District. Anchored on Herskovits' Cultural Transmission Theory (1948) and Boas' Cultural Relativism Theory (1940), the study sought to understand how teachers integrate cultural heritage into instruction, address challenges in preserving culture, and generate insights for strengthening culturally responsive education. Ten purposively selected MAPEH teachers from three elementary schools participated through Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDI). Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. Findings revealed that teachers actively integrate indigenous knowledge, traditional music, dances, games, and artistic practices into lessons to foster learners' cultural identity, appreciation, and respect for diversity. They highlighted the value of contextualized and experiential learning in making cultural education meaningful and engaging. Challenges included limited instructional materials, insufficient cultural resources, language barriers, lack of specialized training, and learners' preference for modern popular culture. Despite these, teachers showed resilience by adopting culturally responsive strategies, collaborating with parents and cultural elders, using available technology, and implementing experiential activities to sustain cultural awareness. The study concludes that MAPEH teachers serve as vital cultural transmitters and advocates of preservation in diverse educational settings. Their experiences underscore the importance of integrating culture-based education to strengthen identity, pride, and inclusivity. Institutional support, responsive training, and adequate resources are essential to sustain cultural preservation, affirming MAPEH as a platform for celebrating Filipino heritage amid globalization.

**Keywords:** MAPEH Teachers, Cultural Preservation, Culturally Responsive Education, Indigenous Knowledge, Experiential Learning.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Sarangani District is home to a rich blend of cultural groups, where learners come from varied ethnic origins, each carrying unique traditions, practices, and artistic expressions. In such a diverse setting, education plays a crucial role in sustaining cultural identity and appreciation. The Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) subject serves as an important avenue for learners to explore and express their cultural heritage through creative and participatory learning experiences. However, with the growing influence of modernization and digital globalization, the preservation of local culture has become increasingly challenging. This study is conducted to explore the lived experiences of teachers in this

learning area in promoting cultural preservation among learners, highlighting how they integrate cultural elements into their teaching, address the challenges they encounter, and develop coping strategies to sustain cultural awareness and pride among students.

Across the world, there is growing recognition that arts, music, and physical education play an essential role in learners. In many countries, schools are now viewed as vital spaces where traditions, values, and creative expressions are transmitted from one generation to the next. In Spain, Martínez-Rodríguez et al. (2022) emphasized that musical heritage can be a living force for cultural appreciation and sustainable development, helping learners see their traditions not as relics

of the past but as active parts of modern life. This perspective aligns with the global understanding that music and the arts nurture a sense of belonging and cultural continuity in increasingly diverse societies.

In Indonesia, Putra et al. (2023) argued that incorporating local wisdom and cultural arts in education helps students stay connected with their heritage amid globalizing pressures, enhancing cultural literacy and reinforcing identity. As Davis (2021) from the United States emphasized, traditional arts serve as cultural anchors in a rapidly globalizing world, helping individuals find meaning and continuity amid the constant flow of global influences, migration, and media. This growing global movement mirrors the goals expressed in UNESCO (2024) Framework for Culture and Arts Education, which highlights that learning in, through and with culture and the arts promotes intercultural dialogue, empathy, and respect for diversity.

In the Philippine context, the integration of culture within education has long been viewed as a means of strengthening national identity and fostering unity amid diversity. In many public schools, particularly in rural and coastal areas, subjects within this learning area provide opportunities for learners to engage with their heritage through songs, dances, and artistic expressions that reflect their communities' traditions. As Boholano et al. (2024) explained, incorporating local stories and artistic expressions in the classroom helps learners see their own cultural backgrounds represented and valued. This approach mirrors the spirit of the Department of Education's push for culturally responsive teaching, where learning is not detached from the students' roots but deeply connected to their lived experiences and local environments.

In Southern Philippines, the need for revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) has become more urgent, especially as younger generations grow up amidst external influences and modernization. Reginio et al. (2024) highlighted that arts, movement, and traditional expressions are powerful mediums for sustaining indigenous knowledge and practices, particularly when teachers make room for local customs and creativity within their lessons. Similarly, Gadaza (2025) emphasized that when teachers integrate cultural identity into the curriculum, they help students understand the beauty of diversity while cultivating mutual respect and pride in their heritage. This dynamic reflects the essence of culture-based instruction in the Philippines, not only as a means of promoting wellness and creativity but also as a vital avenue for preserving and celebrating the country's rich cultural diversity.

However, many teachers in this discipline find themselves caught between the vibrant pull of modern pop culture and the fading echoes of indigenous and folk traditions. Learners are often more captivated by viral dance trends and global music icons than by the cultural rhythms, art forms, and games that reflect their own heritage. This shift makes it increasingly difficult for teachers to sustain students' interest in traditional

practices and to weave cultural preservation meaningfully into classroom instruction. As Caban (2024) emphasized, educators in this learning area in the Philippines must find creative ways to harmonize technology with cultural education, using digital platforms not to replace local traditions but to breathe new life into them and foster pride in one's roots.

This challenge is deeply felt in the context of Sarangani District, where learners come from diverse cultural origins. The researcher has observed how teachers in this discipline navigate the pressures of modernization, social media influence, and digital globalization while striving to keep local culture alive in their classrooms. Through this study, the researcher aims to contribute to making this learning area not only relevant but also a vital force in sustaining and celebrating cultural heritage amid the changing tides of the modern world. In a culturally diverse setting like Sarangani District, where learners come from various ethnic and cultural origins, the teaching of Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) plays a vital role in preserving and celebrating cultural heritage. MAPEH serves not only as a medium for creative expression but also as a bridge that connects learners to their roots, traditions, and shared identities. Understanding how teachers experience and navigate their role in promoting cultural preservation is essential in appreciating the significance of culture-based education in the elementary classroom.

## II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) teachers in promoting cultural preservation among learners. Phenomenology was deemed appropriate because it focuses on understanding the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences and how these experiences shape their perceptions and actions. Through this approach, the study examined how MAPEH teachers perceive, experience, and interpret their role in integrating cultural preservation into classroom instruction. It sought to uncover the essence of their experiences, including their insights, beliefs, challenges, and coping mechanisms while teaching in culturally diverse educational settings. By capturing teachers' firsthand accounts, the study provided a deeper understanding of how they contribute to sustaining indigenous traditions, cultural values, and local heritage through educational practices. Furthermore, the phenomenological approach allowed participants to articulate their lived realities in their own words, placing their perspectives at the center of the inquiry and enriching the understanding of cultural preservation in the educational context.

The informants of this study consisted of ten (10) purposively selected MAPEH teachers from three elementary schools within the Sarangani District. Purposive sampling was employed to identify participants who possessed relevant experiences in culturally responsive instruction and in

integrating cultural elements into MAPEH teaching. Specifically, the selected teachers had direct involvement in promoting cultural awareness and preservation among learners, making them well-positioned to provide rich and meaningful insights related to the study. This sampling technique was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth information from participants whose experiences closely aligned with the objectives of the inquiry.

Moreover, data were collected through individual in-depth interviews, which served as the primary method of data gathering. This approach allowed the informants to openly share detailed accounts, reflections, and lived experiences regarding their role in promoting cultural preservation through MAPEH instruction. The use of semi-structured, open-ended interview questions facilitated a deeper exploration of participants' perspectives, emotions, and experiences while providing flexibility for probing and clarification. Consequently, the interviews generated comprehensive data on the challenges encountered by teachers, the strategies they employed, and the meanings they attributed to their teaching practices in culturally diverse learning environments.

Following the data collection process, the interview responses were transcribed, organized, coded, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, significant statements, and emerging themes. To enhance the credibility, trustworthiness, and validity of the findings, the study employed environmental triangulation by comparing data gathered from MAPEH teachers across three different school settings within the Sarangani District. This approach enabled the researcher to examine similarities and variations in participants' experiences across diverse educational contexts. Through thematic analysis, the data were systematically interpreted and categorized into meaningful themes that captured the essence of the phenomenon under investigation. This analytical process ensured that the participants' authentic voices, perspectives, and lived experiences remained central to the interpretation and presentation of the findings.

The study adhered to established ethical principles throughout the research process to protect the rights, dignity, safety, and well-being of all participants. Given the focus on the lived experiences of MAPEH teachers in promoting cultural preservation among learners, particular attention was given to maintaining confidentiality, respect, integrity, and professionalism. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their voluntary involvement, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Furthermore, all information gathered was treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic and research purposes, ensuring the ethical conduct and integrity of the study.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The experiences of MAPEH teachers in promoting cultural preservation among culturally diverse learners highlighted their active role in sustaining and nurturing cultural heritage in the classroom. The participants intentionally integrated indigenous knowledge, traditions, and artistic expressions into their lessons as a means of promoting cultural preservation and making learning more meaningful and relevant to learners. Their narratives revealed various practices and experiences that contributed to the preservation of culture within the educational setting. Presented below are the themes, sub-themes, and significant statements that emerged from the participants' narratives, illustrating the experiences of MAPEH teachers in promoting cultural preservation among culturally diverse learners.

#### ➤ *Integration of Cultural Practices in MAPEH Instruction*

The theme Integration of Cultural Practices in MAPEH Instruction highlights how teachers intentionally integrated cultural content and practices into MAPEH lessons to promote cultural preservation and strengthen learners' appreciation of their heritage. The participants' lived experiences revealed that culture was not taught as a separate component of instruction; rather, it was embedded across Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health through the incorporation of indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, creative activities, and contextualized learning experiences. The findings suggested that integrating cultural practices into MAPEH instruction served as an important strategy for sustaining cultural preservation among culturally diverse learners. Through the integration of indigenous knowledge, contextualized learning experiences, creative expression, and cultural meaning-making, teachers fostered learning environments that encouraged learners to appreciate, preserve, and celebrate their cultural identities while developing respect for cultural diversity. The following sub-themes emerged under the main theme Integration of Cultural Practices in MAPEH Instruction.

#### • *Incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices.*

The sub-theme Incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices highlights how MAPEH teachers intentionally integrated indigenous knowledge, skills, and cultural practices into instruction as a strategy for promoting cultural preservation among culturally diverse learners. The participants' lived experiences revealed that indigenous knowledge was not treated as supplementary content; rather, it was embedded across various MAPEH components to make learning culturally relevant, meaningful, and reflective of learners' identities. Through this integration, learners were provided with opportunities to engage in traditional practices that strengthened their understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage.

In general, the findings suggested that the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems and practices served as a fundamental strategy in promoting cultural preservation within MAPEH instruction. Through the integration of traditional songs, dances, games, musical instruments, and community-based cultural practices, teachers fostered culturally responsive learning environments that strengthened learners' cultural awareness, appreciation, and identity. Although the approaches varied depending on available resources and classroom contexts, the participants consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to sustaining indigenous knowledge and ensuring its continued relevance among culturally diverse learners.

- *Contextualized and Hands-on Cultural Learning.*

The sub-theme highlights how MAPEH teachers intentionally designed learning experiences that connected cultural knowledge with learners' lived experiences through experiential, performance-based, and participatory activities. The participants' lived experiences revealed that cultural preservation became more meaningful when learners actively engaged in creating, performing, and experiencing cultural practices rather than merely discussing them conceptually. Through contextualized activities, teachers transformed cultural learning into authentic experiences that enabled learners to connect classroom instruction with their identities, traditions, and community practices. This finding aligns with perspectives that emphasize experiential and culturally contextualized learning as essential in strengthening learner engagement and cultural understanding. The participants' responses illustrated that experiential learning extended beyond physical activities to include listening, observation, interaction, and active participation. Through sensory experiences and cultural immersion, learners developed a deeper appreciation and understanding of their own culture while cultivating respect for cultural diversity.

Moreover, teachers also emphasized that contextualized cultural learning required flexibility and creativity in adapting activities according to available resources and classroom realities. Although approaches varied depending on access to materials and opportunities for implementation, the participants consistently highlighted that meaningful learning occurred when learners actively participated in performing, creating, and reflecting on cultural experiences. Overall, the findings suggested that contextualized and hands-on cultural learning served as an important strategy for sustaining cultural preservation within MAPEH instruction. Through experiential activities, creative expression, performance-based tasks, and culturally grounded learning experiences, teachers fostered learning environments where learners actively engaged with culture, strengthened their cultural identity, and developed a deeper appreciation of their heritage and the traditions of others.

- *Teaching Cultural Meaning and Awareness.*

The sub-theme Teaching Cultural Meaning and Awareness highlights how MAPEH teachers extended

instruction beyond skill development by emphasizing the historical, symbolic, and value-laden meanings of cultural practices. The participants' experiences revealed that cultural instruction became more meaningful when learners were guided to understand not only how cultural practices were performed but also why they existed and what they represented within the community. Through this approach, cultural learning shifted from mere performance to a deeper interpretation and appreciation of heritage as a lived experience. This finding aligns with contemporary perspectives on culturally responsive education, which emphasize meaning-making as a central component in developing cultural literacy and identity.

Overall, the findings suggested that teaching cultural meaning and awareness was essential in ensuring that cultural practices were not reduced to mere performance. Instead, the participants emphasized interpretation, reflection, and contextual understanding to help learners appreciate the deeper significance of cultural traditions. Through this approach, learners developed stronger cultural awareness and a more meaningful connection to their heritage, thereby supporting the broader goal of cultural preservation in education.

- *Development of Cultural Awareness and Identity Among Learners*

The second main theme Development of Cultural Awareness and Identity Among Learners highlights how MAPEH teachers fostered learners' understanding, respect, and appreciation of diverse cultural traditions through meaningful and inclusive classroom experiences. The participants' narratives revealed that the integration of culture into Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health provided learners with opportunities to engage not only with their own cultural backgrounds but also with the traditions and practices of others. Through these experiences, learners developed a stronger sense of cultural identity, pride in their heritage, and respect for cultural diversity. Ultimately, the theme reflects how culturally responsive instruction contributed to the development of learners who were culturally aware, confident, and socially respectful.

Moreover, the participants' accounts further revealed that MAPEH served as a valuable avenue for cultural expression, enabling learners to actively construct and affirm their identities through creative, artistic, and performance-based activities. Overall, the findings suggested that cultural awareness and identity development were strengthened when teachers intentionally integrated learners' cultural backgrounds into classroom experiences that promoted expression, inclusion, and appreciation of diversity. This finding is supported by Huang (2025), who emphasized that cultural identity development is shaped by learners' lived experiences and cultural environments, influencing how they understand themselves and relate to others in educational settings. These findings underscore the important role of culturally responsive teaching in fostering cultural awareness, identity formation, and respect for diversity among learners. The different dimensions of this

theme are further elaborated through the sub-themes presented below.

- *Promotion of Learner Engagement and Cultural Sharing.*

The sub-theme Promotion of Learner Engagement and Cultural Sharing highlights how MAPEH teachers intentionally created classroom environments that promoted active learner engagement through the sharing of cultural experiences, traditions, and identities. The participants' narratives revealed that cultural sharing was not treated as an occasional classroom activity but as an integral component of instruction that supported cultural preservation and strengthened learners' sense of belonging. Through both structured and informal opportunities for expression, learners were encouraged to bring their cultural backgrounds into classroom discussions and activities, making learning more inclusive, participatory, and meaningful.

Overall, the findings suggested that promoting learner engagement and cultural sharing played a vital role in strengthening inclusion, participation, and cultural awareness in the classroom. When learners were provided with opportunities to share their experiences, traditions, and perspectives, they developed a stronger sense of identity, belonging, and appreciation of cultural diversity. This finding is supported by Bennett et al. (2021), who emphasized that learner participation in culturally responsive classrooms enhances engagement and enables students to actively construct and affirm their cultural identities through shared experiences. Similarly, Singh and Taylor (2022) noted that both structured and informal forms of participation contribute to greater cultural awareness and a deeper sense of belonging among learners in culturally diverse educational settings.

- *Building Respect for Cultural Diversity.*

The sub-theme Building Respect for Cultural Diversity highlights the crucial role of MAPEH teachers in fostering inclusivity, understanding, and mutual respect among learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. The participants' experiences revealed that respect for cultural diversity was not developed through isolated lessons but through intentional instructional practices that consistently exposed learners to varied cultural expressions and encouraged positive interactions among peers. Through music, arts, physical activities, and inclusive classroom strategies, teachers created learning environments that valued cultural differences while promoting shared understanding, cooperation, and acceptance among learners.

Altogether, the findings suggested that respect for cultural diversity was strengthened through intentional exposure, inclusive practices, and value-oriented instruction. When learners were consistently engaged with diverse cultural perspectives in a respectful learning environment, they developed deeper intercultural understanding, empathy, and appreciation of cultural differences. This finding aligns with

Tran and Pham (2023), who emphasized that culturally responsive teaching fosters intercultural respect by exposing learners to multiple cultural perspectives and reducing bias in classroom interactions. The findings further indicate that MAPEH instruction can serve as an effective platform for cultivating respect for diversity and promoting harmonious relationships among learners from different cultural backgrounds.

- *Strengthening Cultural Identity and Confidence.*

The sub-theme Strengthening Cultural Identity and Confidence highlights how MAPEH teachers played a vital role in fostering learners' pride in their cultural heritage while enhancing their self-confidence through culturally responsive classroom experiences. The participants' narratives revealed that cultural learning in Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health extended beyond knowledge acquisition and served as a meaningful avenue for identity formation and personal empowerment. Through opportunities for expression, performance, and reflection, learners were encouraged to value their cultural backgrounds and confidently share these within the classroom and the wider community.

The participants also emphasized the importance of providing structured opportunities for cultural expression and performance. Informants from medium-sized schools highlighted activities that allowed learners to showcase their cultural heritage through presentations, reflections, and creative outputs, whereas those from small-school contexts emphasized more informal and immediate forms of recognition of learners' cultural backgrounds. Despite these contextual differences, all participants consistently emphasized that confidence and identity were strengthened when learners' cultural identities were acknowledged, affirmed, and integrated into instruction. The findings suggested that strengthening cultural identity and confidence was a significant outcome of culturally responsive teaching in MAPEH. When learners were provided with meaningful opportunities to express and celebrate their culture, they developed greater pride, self-confidence, and a stronger sense of identity. This finding is supported by Kim and Park (2022), who emphasized that culturally responsive pedagogy enhances students' self-confidence and identity formation through active engagement in cultural expression and performance-based learning experiences.

- *Difficulties in Navigating Cultural Preservation in Diverse Classroom*

The theme Difficulties in Navigating Cultural Preservation in a Diverse Classroom highlights the various challenges experienced by MAPEH teachers in sustaining and promoting cultural preservation among learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. The participants' narratives revealed that although cultural integration was intentionally incorporated and highly valued in instruction, its implementation was often constrained by linguistic, pedagogical, and resource-related barriers. These challenges included language differences, limited instructional materials, time constraints, and varying

levels of learners' cultural awareness and interest. Despite these difficulties, the participants continued to adapt their teaching practices and employed culturally responsive approaches to sustain meaningful cultural learning experiences.

Largely, the findings suggested that the challenges associated with cultural preservation were multifaceted, encompassing linguistic, pedagogical, resource-related, and attitudinal dimensions. While the nature and extent of these challenges varied across school contexts, the participants consistently demonstrated resilience and adaptability in addressing them. Through the use of culturally responsive, collaborative, and context-sensitive strategies, teachers were able to navigate barriers and maintain opportunities for cultural learning. These findings underscore the importance of flexible instructional practices and sustained support systems in promoting cultural preservation within culturally diverse classroom environments.

- *Experienced Barriers in Cultural Teaching.*

The sub-theme Experienced Barriers in Cultural Teaching highlights the multiple challenges encountered by MAPEH teachers that hindered the effective promotion of cultural preservation in culturally diverse classrooms. The participants' narratives revealed that while cultural integration was recognized and valued as an important component of instruction, its implementation was often constrained by linguistic, pedagogical, and resource-related limitations. Across different school contexts, these barriers manifested in various but interconnected forms, influencing how teachers designed, adapted, and delivered culturally responsive lessons. Informants from large schools particularly emphasized language and literacy difficulties as significant barriers, as learners often possessed varying levels of understanding of cultural concepts and local languages.

Triangulation across school contexts further revealed both shared experiences and contextual differences in the challenges encountered by teachers. Participants from small schools emphasized difficulties related to learner diversity and limited cultural exposure, particularly in making cultural lessons meaningful and relevant to all learners. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools highlighted structural and attitudinal barriers, including limited instructional resources and misconceptions about cultural practices. Despite these contextual variations, participants across all school settings consistently identified resource limitations, time constraints, and learner diversity as major challenges in cultural teaching. A notable difference emerged in the nature of these barriers, with small schools placing greater emphasis on contextual diversity and limited exposure, whereas medium and large schools more frequently highlighted systemic and material constraints. Overall, the findings suggested that barriers to cultural teaching were complex and context-dependent, requiring teachers to continually adapt their instructional approaches. These findings align with Hammond (2021), who argued that culturally responsive teaching is often constrained by institutional

limitations, teacher preparedness, and resource inequities, particularly in diverse educational settings where educators are expected to address multiple learner needs simultaneously.

- *Adapting Culturally Responsive Strategies.*

The sub-theme Adapting Culturally Responsive Strategies highlights how MAPEH teachers modified their instructional approaches to address the challenges of promoting cultural preservation in culturally diverse classrooms. The participants' narratives revealed a strong commitment to inclusive, learner-centered, and culturally sensitive practices that ensured instruction remained responsive to the varied cultural backgrounds of learners. Rather than relying on a fixed set of teaching methods, the participants continuously adjusted their strategies to promote respect, understanding, and meaningful engagement with cultural content. Across the narratives, there was a clear emphasis on adaptive and responsive pedagogical approaches, reflecting intentional lesson design that promoted representation, inclusivity, and recognition of diverse cultural identities within instructional activities. The findings suggested that teachers consciously adapted their instructional practices to ensure that cultural integration remained meaningful, respectful, and responsive to learners' needs. This finding supports the assertion of Ladson-Billings (2021) that culturally responsive teaching requires continuous pedagogical adaptation to align instruction with learners' cultural contexts and promote equitable learning opportunities.

Meanwhile, triangulation across school contexts revealed both common practices and contextual variations in the implementation of culturally responsive strategies. Participants from small schools tended to emphasize collaborative and cooperative learning approaches, frequently utilizing peer interaction and group-based activities to address cultural differences and foster inclusivity. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools demonstrated more structured approaches through inquiry-based learning, inclusive language use, and intentional lesson planning that reflected learners' diverse cultural backgrounds. While participants from large schools provided less explicit descriptions of adaptive strategies within this sub-theme, their narratives implicitly demonstrated cultural responsiveness through the integration of cultural content and culturally relevant learning experiences. Despite these contextual differences, all participants consistently expressed a commitment to adapting instruction to meet the needs of culturally diverse learners. A slight variation emerged in the degree of formality in implementation, with small schools relying more on informal and collaborative strategies, whereas medium and large schools tended to employ more structured and systematically planned approaches. These findings align with Banks (2020), who emphasized that effective multicultural education depends on teachers' ability to adapt instructional strategies to diverse cultural contexts while promoting inclusivity, equity, and cultural understanding.

- *Collaborative and Experiential Ways of Coping.*

The sub-theme Collaborative and Experiential Ways of Coping highlights how MAPEH teachers addressed the challenges of cultural preservation through collaborative and experiential approaches that actively engaged learners and extended learning beyond the classroom. The participants' narratives revealed a strong emphasis on shared responsibility, hands-on learning, and community involvement as practical means of sustaining cultural integration despite instructional constraints. These approaches reflected teachers' efforts to transform limitations into opportunities for meaningful, participatory, and culturally relevant learning experiences. Overall, the findings suggested that teachers relied on collaborative networks and experiential learning strategies to sustain cultural preservation amid the challenges encountered in culturally diverse classrooms. This finding is supported by Kolb and Kolb (2022), who emphasized that experiential learning, when combined with collaboration, promotes deeper understanding and meaningful knowledge construction through active participation.

In addition, triangulation across school contexts revealed both commonalities and contextual variations in the coping strategies employed by teachers. Participants from small schools emphasized collaborative and community-centered approaches, often drawing on local cultural resources and stakeholder participation to enrich learning experiences. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools demonstrated more structured experiential strategies through inclusive activities, storytelling, and cross-cultural learning opportunities. Meanwhile, participants from large schools tended to focus on organized performance-based activities and peer-assisted learning, reflecting a more systematic implementation of collaborative practices. Despite these contextual differences, all participants consistently viewed collaboration and experiential learning as effective mechanisms for addressing the challenges of cultural preservation. A slight variation emerged in the level of formality and structure of implementation, with small schools relying more on informal and community-based practices, whereas larger schools implemented more organized and programmatic approaches. These findings align with Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who emphasized that collaborative and experiential teaching approaches are essential for addressing diverse learning needs and promoting inclusive, culturally responsive education. Overall, the findings underscored that coping with the challenges of cultural preservation was not solely an individual endeavor but a collective process in which teachers actively engaged learners, colleagues, families, and communities in sustaining culturally meaningful educational practices.

Meanwhile, the second research question of this study explored how teachers cope with and managed the difficulties encountered in culturally diverse classrooms. The findings highlighted the adaptive strategies, collaborative practices, and innovative approaches employed by teachers to sustain cultural preservation despite existing barriers. The participants

demonstrated resilience and commitment by utilizing culturally responsive, creative, and experiential methods to support learners' cultural understanding, appreciation, and engagement. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the participants' narratives regarding their coping mechanisms are presented below.

- *Adapting Culturally Responsive Teaching*

The first main theme of the coping mechanism, Adapting Culturally Responsive Teaching, highlights how teachers adjusted their instructional practices to accommodate the diverse cultural backgrounds of their learners. The participants' narratives revealed that they integrated learners' cultural contexts, values, and experiences into lesson design and delivery to make learning more meaningful, inclusive, and relevant. Through these adaptations, teachers promoted greater cultural understanding, respect, and engagement while ensuring that cultural preservation remained an integral part of instruction. The findings suggested that teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by adopting culturally responsive approaches that addressed learners' diverse needs and experiences. This finding is supported by Paris (2021), who emphasized that culturally sustaining pedagogy requires educators to continuously adapt their teaching practices to affirm and sustain learners' cultural identities, particularly in diverse classroom settings. The sub-themes that emerged under this theme are presented below.

- *Analyzing Learners' Cultural Backgrounds.*

The sub-theme Analyzing Learners' Cultural Backgrounds highlights how teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by grounding instruction in learners' cultural contexts and lived experiences. The participants' narratives revealed that they intentionally examined and considered learners' cultural backgrounds to make lessons more meaningful, relevant, and accessible. This approach enabled cultural integration to occur naturally within classroom instruction, thereby enhancing learner engagement, participation, and understanding. Overall, the findings suggested that cultural familiarization served as a foundational strategy in culturally responsive teaching. The participants consistently demonstrated efforts to incorporate learners' cultural experiences into instructional planning and delivery, reflecting the principle that effective teaching begins with an understanding of students' cultural contexts and identities.

The triangulation across school contexts revealed both commonalities and variations in the practice of cultural familiarization and contextualization. Participants from large schools demonstrated more structured and deliberate integration of local culture into lesson content, whereas those from small schools implicitly practiced contextualization through the use of localized examples and improvised resources. Meanwhile, participants from medium-sized schools emphasized adaptive instructional strategies, such as modifying lesson delivery and responding to learners' diverse needs, to ensure cultural relevance. Despite these contextual differences,

all participants consistently emphasized that aligning instruction with learners' cultural backgrounds enhanced engagement and supported cultural preservation. A slight variation emerged in the level of intentionality, with large schools exhibiting more systematic integration, while small schools relied more on practical and experience-based approaches. These findings align with Hammond (2020), who argued that contextualizing instruction based on students' cultural experiences strengthens comprehension, engagement, and meaningful learning in diverse educational settings.

- *Promoting Cultural Awareness and Respect.*

The sub-theme Promoting Cultural Awareness and Respect highlights how teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by intentionally fostering learners' understanding, appreciation, and respect for diverse cultural practices. The participants' narratives revealed that they actively cultivated cultural awareness to address misconceptions, reduce bias, and promote inclusivity within culturally diverse classrooms. Informants from large school settings particularly emphasized the importance of explaining the meanings and significance of cultural practices to help learners develop deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. Overall, the findings suggested that promoting cultural awareness and respect served as an important coping strategy that enabled teachers to create more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. This finding is supported by Milner (2021), who emphasized that teachers must intentionally develop learners' cultural awareness and sensitivity to foster equitable and inclusive educational experiences.

Triangulation across school contexts revealed both shared practices and contextual variations in the promotion of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Participants from large schools focused on explicitly teaching the meanings, values, and significance of cultural practices, whereas those from medium-sized schools emphasized shaping learners' attitudes toward respect, acceptance, and appreciation of cultural differences. In contrast, participants from small schools fostered cultural awareness more implicitly through collaborative activities, cultural sharing, and peer interactions that encouraged mutual understanding. Despite these differences, all participants shared the common goal of promoting respect for diversity and minimizing cultural misconceptions among learners. A slight variation emerged in instructional emphasis, with large schools focusing more on cognitive understanding of culture, while small and medium schools placed greater emphasis on affective and social development. These findings align with Banks (2020), who argued that developing cultural sensitivity is essential in multicultural education as it enables learners to appreciate diversity and engage respectfully with different cultural perspectives.

- *Applying Culturally Responsive Instruction.*

The sub-theme Applying Culturally Responsive Instruction highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by modifying their teaching strategies to address the diverse needs, abilities, and cultural backgrounds of their learners. The participants' narratives revealed the importance of flexibility, differentiation, and responsiveness in ensuring that instruction remained inclusive and culturally relevant. Teachers engaged in continuous reflection and adaptation of their instructional practices to address the complexities of culturally diverse classrooms and to promote meaningful cultural learning experiences. Overall, the findings suggested that culturally responsive instruction served as an essential coping mechanism that enabled teachers to effectively support learner engagement while sustaining cultural preservation efforts. This finding is supported by Hammond (2021), who explained that culturally responsive instruction requires teachers to adjust pedagogy, scaffolding, and learning experiences to align with learners' cultural contexts and educational needs.

Moreover, triangulation across school contexts revealed both commonalities and variations in the implementation of culturally responsive instruction. Participants from large schools implicitly demonstrated more structured approaches, often integrating cultural elements systematically into lesson planning and delivery. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools explicitly emphasized reflective practice, differentiated instruction, and the intentional adaptation of teaching strategies to meet learners' diverse needs. Meanwhile, participants from small schools highlighted flexibility and improvisation, often relying on creative and practical approaches due to limited instructional resources. Despite these contextual differences, all participants consistently demonstrated a commitment to making instruction inclusive, adaptable, and learner-centered. A slight variation emerged in the degree of formalization, with medium and large schools employing more structured instructional strategies, whereas small schools relied more heavily on experiential and resource-based adjustments. These findings align with Tomlinson (2021), who noted that differentiated and responsive instruction is essential for addressing diverse learner needs and promoting meaningful engagement in inclusive classroom settings.

- *Utilizing Creative Instructional Strategies*

The second main theme on the coping mechanism, Utilizing Creative Instructional Strategies, highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by employing innovative, flexible, and resourceful teaching approaches. The participants' narratives revealed that they adapted lessons based on available resources, integrated multimedia and locally available materials, and simplified cultural concepts to make learning more accessible and meaningful for diverse learners. These strategies enabled teachers to sustain learner engagement and participation despite limitations in instructional materials and cultural resources. Overall, the findings suggested that creative instructional

practices served as effective coping mechanisms that supported cultural preservation while ensuring inclusive and engaging learning experiences. The participants' narrations that reflect this theme are presented below.

- *Flexible and Differentiated Instructional Practices.*

The theme Flexible and Differentiated Instructional Practices highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by employing innovative, adaptable, and resourceful teaching approaches. The participants' narratives revealed that they modified lessons according to learners' needs and available resources, utilized multimedia and instructional materials creatively, and simplified complex cultural concepts to make them more accessible and meaningful. These strategies enabled teachers to sustain learner engagement and participation despite limitations in cultural resources, instructional materials, and classroom conditions. Overall, the findings suggested that teachers addressed the challenges of cultural preservation through flexible, differentiated, and learner-centered instructional practices that prioritized accessibility, inclusivity, and meaningful cultural learning. This finding is supported by Thomas (2020), who emphasized that culturally responsive and adaptive teaching strategies enable educators to connect learning content with learners' cultural experiences, thereby enhancing engagement, understanding, and inclusivity in diverse classroom environments.

- *Use of Digital, Improvised, and Community-Based Resources.*

The sub-theme Use of Digital, Improvised, and Community-Based Resources highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by maximizing available technologies, online materials, improvised resources, and community knowledge when authentic cultural materials were limited. The participants' narratives revealed the importance of utilizing multimedia tools, locally available materials, and cultural resources from the community to enrich learning experiences and sustain cultural instruction. These practices enabled teachers to make cultural content more accessible, engaging, and relevant despite resource constraints. Overall, the findings suggested that teachers strategically combined digital, improvised, and community-based resources to support cultural preservation and meaningful learning. This finding is supported by Mishra and Koehler (2021), who emphasized that effective teaching in resource-constrained environments requires the integration of technological, pedagogical, and contextual knowledge to deliver content creatively and effectively.

Triangulation across school contexts revealed both commonalities and contextual variations in the use of instructional resources. Participants from small schools relied heavily on improvised materials and community-based knowledge to compensate for limited access to instructional resources. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools

demonstrated greater integration of digital tools and structured multimedia resources, including videos, online platforms, and Department of Education materials to supplement instruction. Meanwhile, participants from large schools placed greater emphasis on community partnerships and local cultural resources, such as elders, cultural practitioners, and barangay support systems. Despite these differences, all participants consistently demonstrated resourcefulness in addressing the scarcity of authentic cultural materials. A slight variation emerged in resource dependence, with small schools relying more on improvisation, medium schools emphasizing digital integration, and large schools drawing more extensively on institutional and community support networks. These findings align with Redecker (2020), who highlighted that digital competence and resource adaptability are essential for sustaining meaningful and inclusive learning in diverse and resource-limited educational settings.

- *Collaboration and Resourcefulness in Teaching.*

The sub-theme Collaboration and Resourcefulness in Teaching highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by seeking alternative solutions, collaborating with various stakeholders, and creatively utilizing available community and institutional resources. The participants' narratives revealed that innovation played a crucial role in addressing instructional limitations and sustaining meaningful cultural learning experiences. Teachers demonstrated initiative by combining community knowledge, expert assistance, and experiential learning strategies to overcome challenges related to cultural instruction and resource availability. Overall, the findings suggested that collaboration and resourcefulness served as important coping mechanisms that enabled teachers to sustain cultural preservation despite existing constraints. This finding is supported by Lucas and Spencer (2021), who emphasized that teacher innovation involves adaptive expertise and creative problem-solving to effectively respond to dynamic classroom needs and resource limitations.

Triangulation across school contexts revealed both shared practices and contextual variations in the application of resourcefulness and innovation. Participants from small schools primarily relied on community engagement and improvised solutions, particularly through collaboration with elders and the use of locally available cultural knowledge. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools demonstrated stronger engagement with external experts, digital tools, and professional learning networks to enhance instructional effectiveness. Meanwhile, participants from large schools emphasized institutional collaboration and structured support systems, including barangay partnerships, cultural programs, and school-based initiatives. Despite these contextual differences, all participants consistently demonstrated creativity, adaptability, and initiative in addressing limitations in cultural teaching resources. A slight variation emerged in the source of innovation, with small schools relying more on community-driven solutions, medium schools utilizing

technological and professional collaboration, and large schools drawing on formal institutional support. These findings align with OECD (2021), which emphasized that teacher innovation is a critical competency in contemporary education, enabling educators to adapt creatively to challenges and provide meaningful learning experiences in diverse educational settings.

➤ *Engaging Community and Collaboration.*

The third main theme of the coping mechanism, Engaging Community and Collaboration, highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by actively involving peers, parents, school leaders, and community members in the teaching and learning process. The participants' narratives revealed that collaboration provided access to authentic cultural knowledge, strengthened instructional support, and enriched learners' cultural experiences. Through shared responsibility and collective participation, teachers were able to address challenges in cultural instruction while fostering stronger school–community relationships. Overall, the findings suggested that community engagement and collaboration served as vital coping mechanisms in sustaining cultural preservation and promoting culturally meaningful learning experiences. This finding is supported by Epstein (2021), who emphasized that effective school–community partnerships enhance student learning through shared responsibility among educators, families, and community stakeholders. The sub-themes that emerged under this theme are presented below.

- *Peer Learning and Student Collaboration.*

The sub-theme Peer Learning and Student Collaboration highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by fostering student-to-student interaction and shared learning experiences. The participants' narratives revealed that collaboration among learners strengthened cultural understanding, encouraged active participation, and created opportunities for cultural exchange within the classroom. Teachers utilized peer collaboration as a practical strategy to address diverse learner backgrounds and limited instructional resources by enabling students to learn from one another's experiences and cultural perspectives. Overall, the findings suggested that peer learning served as an effective coping mechanism that promoted cultural awareness, engagement, and inclusion among learners. This finding is supported by Johnson and Johnson (2021), who emphasized that cooperative learning enhances student achievement and intercultural understanding through positive interdependence and meaningful peer interaction in diverse classroom settings.

Triangulation across school contexts revealed both shared practices and contextual variations in the implementation of peer and collaborative learning strategies. Participants from small schools strongly emphasized informal peer sharing and collaborative group work as means of facilitating cultural learning. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools demonstrated more structured peer interaction through guided

discussions, reflective activities, and opportunities for learners to share cultural stories and experiences. Meanwhile, participants from large schools highlighted formalized peer-support systems, including peer leaders and organized group tasks that encouraged collaboration and participation. Despite these differences, all participants consistently recognized peer collaboration as an effective strategy for enhancing cultural learning and learner engagement. A slight variation emerged in the level of structure, with small schools relying more on spontaneous collaboration, whereas medium and large schools implemented more organized peer-learning approaches. These findings align with Gillies (2020), who noted that cooperative learning environments enhance student engagement, communication, and cultural understanding across diverse educational contexts.

- *Partnership with Families and Community Elders.*

The sub-theme Partnership with Families and Community Elders highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by actively involving parents, elders, local leaders, and cultural practitioners in the teaching and learning process. The participants' narratives revealed that community engagement provided learners with authentic cultural experiences and enriched classroom instruction through the sharing of indigenous knowledge, traditions, and local practices. Informants from large school settings particularly emphasized the value of strong institutional and barangay linkages in supporting cultural programs and activities. Overall, the findings suggested that collaboration with families and community members served as a vital coping mechanism that strengthened cultural preservation efforts and addressed limitations in classroom-based resources. This finding is supported by Henderson and Mapp (2021), who stressed that meaningful family and community engagement strengthens student learning by connecting school-based instruction with learners' cultural and social contexts.

Triangulation across school contexts revealed both commonalities and contextual differences in stakeholder engagement practices. Participants from small schools emphasized direct collaboration with parents, elders, and community members to supplement limited instructional resources and provide cultural learning opportunities. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools highlighted more structured forms of engagement through cultural clubs, barangay-supported initiatives, and community-sharing activities. Meanwhile, participants from large schools demonstrated formalized partnerships with barangay councils, tribal leaders, and cultural organizations through organized school and community programs. Despite these differences, all participants consistently viewed stakeholder engagement as essential in sustaining cultural preservation within education. A slight variation emerged in the level of formalization, with small schools relying more on informal community relationships, whereas medium and large schools utilized more structured institutional partnerships. These findings align with Epstein and Sheldon (2020), who noted that school–community

partnerships enhance cultural responsiveness and student engagement when stakeholders work collaboratively toward shared educational goals.

- *Institutional and Stakeholder Support in Cultural Preservation.*

The sub-theme Institutional and Stakeholder Support in Cultural Preservation highlights how MAPEH teachers coped with challenges in promoting cultural preservation by drawing on support from schools, local government units, cultural institutions, and community organizations. The participants' narratives revealed that institutional systems provided essential resources, policy support, and collaborative structures that strengthened the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. Informants from large school settings particularly emphasized the importance of strong institutional linkages in sustaining cultural programs and activities. Overall, the findings suggested that institutional and stakeholder support served as a critical coping mechanism that enabled teachers to promote cultural preservation more effectively despite instructional and resource-related challenges. This finding is supported by Coburn and Penuel (2021), who emphasized that institutional support systems play a crucial role in sustaining instructional innovation and culturally responsive educational practices.

Triangulation across school contexts revealed both shared reliance on support systems and contextual variations in how such support was accessed and utilized. Participants from small schools emphasized informal yet essential sources of support, including parental assistance, improvised materials, and community-based cultural activities. In contrast, participants from medium-sized schools highlighted school-based programs, Department of Education resources, cultural clubs, and multimedia-supported initiatives that enhanced cultural instruction. Meanwhile, participants from large schools demonstrated stronger formal partnerships with barangay councils, tribal leaders, and school governance structures that actively supported cultural preservation efforts. Despite these differences, all participants consistently recognized institutional and social support systems as vital in sustaining cultural education. A slight variation emerged in the degree of institutionalization, with small schools relying more on informal support networks, whereas medium and large schools benefited from more structured programs and formal partnerships. These findings align with Spillane, Hopkins, and Sweet (2020), who noted that educational improvement is strengthened by distributed support systems that enable teachers to effectively implement innovative and culturally responsive practices.

Finally, this study presents the key insights derived from the lived experiences and coping mechanisms of MAPEH teachers in promoting cultural preservation among culturally diverse learners. These insights reflect the practical lessons and meaningful understandings gained from teachers' instructional practices, adaptive strategies, and collaborative efforts in

sustaining cultural heritage within the educational setting. The findings underscore the importance of culturally responsive teaching, community engagement, and instructional innovation in fostering culturally meaningful learning experiences. Two actionable insights emerged from the study: (1) Strengthen School–Community Cultural Partnerships and (2) Enhance Teacher Capacity in Culturally Responsive and Resourceful Instruction.

Altogether, the actionable insights highlight strategic directions for strengthening cultural preservation in culturally diverse classrooms. The first insight emphasizes the need to strengthen partnerships among schools, families, community elders, cultural practitioners, and local organizations to provide learners with authentic cultural experiences and strengthen community participation in cultural education. The second insight, Enhance Teacher Capacity in Culturally Responsive and Resourceful Instruction, underscores the importance of equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to effectively integrate culture into teaching and learning. Participants emphasized the value of continuous reflection, collaboration, innovation, community engagement, and the use of available resources, including digital technologies, in addressing challenges related to cultural instruction. These findings suggest that teacher professional growth is most effective when educators are empowered to adapt, design, and refine instructional practices based on the realities of their classrooms. Therefore, enhancing teacher capacity serves not only as a professional development priority but also as a fundamental strategy for sustaining culturally responsive, resourceful, and culturally relevant education that promotes long-term cultural preservation.

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