

Facing Barriers, Sustaining Social Interaction: The Perceptions of Badjao Entrepreneurs on the Value of Cultural Endurance Fostered by Patience, Resilience, and Self-reliance

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Abstract

Social fragility of Indigenous Peoples engaged in entrepreneurial activity is a global concern. In this study, I explored the resilience of indigenous people engaged in entrepreneurial activities amidst disruptions outside their natural habitat. Using a qualitative descriptive design, I interviewed 10 participants I selected through purposive sampling. Using thematic analysis, I found that Badjao entrepreneurs face financial barriers, physical risks, and exhausting working conditions that limit their business opportunities. Despite these challenges, they demonstrate flexibility and adaptive social interaction, allowing them to build relationships and sustain their livelihoods. Their cultural endurance, rooted in a survival and family-oriented way of life, strengthens their resilience despite discrimination and limited resources. Local government and educational leaders may strengthen culturally responsive policies and programs to advocate Badjao cultural endurance, and resilience in livelihood. Exploratory factor analysis may be pursued to develop questionnaires for themes, and to apply mediation analysis using patience, resilience, and self-reliance as mediating variables.

Keywords: Facing barriers; sustaining social interaction; perceptions of Badjao entrepreneurs; value of cultural endurance; patience; resilience; self-reliance

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Its Settings

The social fragility of Indigenous Peoples engaged in entrepreneurial activity has increasingly been recognized as a significant global concern. Across various regions, indigenous entrepreneurs operate within contexts marked by marginalization, limited inclusion, and unstable social positioning, which shape their participation in economic systems. Recent studies highlighted that Indigenous entrepreneurship often exists within fragile social environments where recognition, inclusion, and equitable engagement remain ongoing issues (Anderson et al., 2023; Dana, 2023). This condition reflects broader patterns of inequality experienced by Indigenous groups worldwide, positioning social fragility as a critical issue in understanding their entrepreneurial realities.

In different national contexts, the social fragility of Indigenous entrepreneurs continues to be evident. In countries such as the United States, Indigenous entrepreneurs navigate complex social landscapes where their participation in mainstream markets remains limited and often overlooked (Smith & Peredo, 2023). Similarly, in Malaysia, Indigenous groups such as the Orang Asli encounter challenges in sustaining entrepreneurial engagement within socially fragile contexts (Nicholas, 2023). In

Australia, Aboriginal entrepreneurs also operate within conditions where social recognition and inclusion in economic activities remain uneven (Hindle & Moroz, 2024). These cases illustrate that social fragility among Indigenous entrepreneurs is not confined to a single region but is a shared global phenomenon.

In the Philippine context, the social fragility of Indigenous peoples engaged in entrepreneurial activities is likewise evident among various ethnolinguistic groups, including the Badjao. Indigenous entrepreneurs often participate in informal and small-scale economic activities while navigating socially fragile environments characterized by marginalization and limited institutional recognition. Recent Philippine-based studies emphasized that Indigenous entrepreneurship exists within contexts where social positioning and inclusion remain precarious, particularly among communities experiencing transitions in livelihood and social interaction (Cariño, 2023; Regaspi et al., 2024).

The consequences of social fragility among Indigenous entrepreneurs are significant and multifaceted. These include reduced participation in broader economic systems, limited access to opportunities for growth, and constraints in sustaining stable entrepreneurial activities. Social fragility may also affect the continuity of cultural practices within entrepreneurship and weaken the capacity of Indigenous individuals to fully engage in socially and economically productive roles (Dana, 2023; Anderson et al., 2023). These outcomes highlighted the importance of addressing social fragility as a critical concern in Indigenous entrepreneurship research.

Significance of the Study

I recognized that this study is significant as it supports SDG 15 (Life on Land) by highlighting the role of Indigenous coping mechanisms in environmental stewardship, biodiversity conservation, and the sustainable use of natural resources, emphasizing the importance of preserving Indigenous knowledge in addressing ecological challenges. In the context of the Philippine national education system, I see that this study may provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers in integrating Indigenous perspectives into teaching and learning, thereby promoting inclusive and equitable education while strengthening cultural preservation. Furthermore, I affirmed that this research aligns with the mission and vision of Holy Cross College of Davao by fostering holistic education that promotes social awareness, cultural sensitivity, and transformative learning, encouraging students to become socially responsible individuals who respect cultural diversity and contribute to community development. The result of this study may be informative for policymakers, and curriculum developers in integrating Indigenous perspectives into teaching and learning processes, aligning with national goals of inclusive and equitable education while strengthening cultural preservation. Furthermore, this research supports the mission and vision of Holy Cross College of Davao by promoting holistic education that fosters social awareness, cultural sensitivity, and transformative learning, encouraging students to become socially responsible individuals who contribute to community development, respect cultural diversity, and uphold values that empower Indigenous peoples in adapting to changing environments.

Research Questions

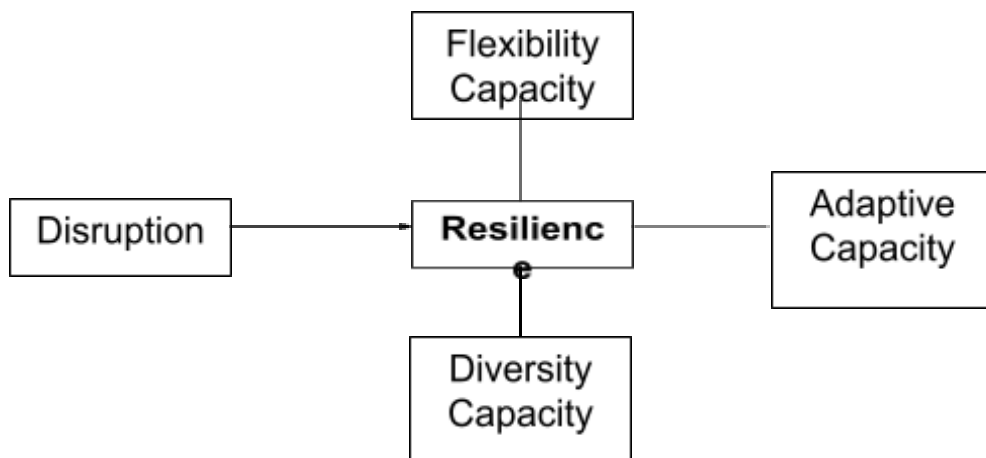
In this study, I explored the resilience of indigenous people engaged in entrepreneurial activities amidst disruptions outside their natural habitat. Specifically, I sought answers to the following questions:

1. What disruptive experiences do Badjao entrepreneurs encounter outside their natural habitats?
2. What resilience characteristics are demonstrated by Badjao entrepreneurs?

Theoretical Lens

I anchored this study on Resilience theory, introduced by C. S. Holling in 1973, which explains how systems can absorb disturbances and still maintain their core functions and structure. Rather than focusing solely on stability or returning to equilibrium, the theory emphasizes a system's capacity to endure change, adapt, and persist despite challenges. It highlights that systems may have multiple stable states and can shift when critical thresholds are exceeded. Overall, resilience theory underscores the importance of flexibility, diversity, and adaptive capacity in sustaining systems in the face of uncertainty and disruption.

Conceptual Lens



Assumption of the Study

I assumed that the challenges faced by Badjao entrepreneurs, who are the participants in this study, align with the core principles of resilience theory by C. S. Holling, particularly in terms of flexibility, diversity, and adaptability. However, beyond these theoretical concepts, I also assumed that there are additional underlying factors influencing their experiences that may not be fully captured by the theory.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, I presented the research design, locale of the study, sample and sampling technique, data gathering technique, data analysis technique, and trustworthiness of the study.

Research Design

I used descriptive qualitative design to describe the phenomenon based on participant perceptions, presenting events as they naturally occurred with minimal interpretation (Kim et al., 2023; Sandelowski, 2023). This approach was appropriate for exploring experiences in a natural context with limited existing research and for capturing participants' direct accounts to inform policy and practice. It allowed me to generate rich, accurate, and practical findings that are easy to understand and apply.

Locale of the Study

I conducted this study in Calinan District, Davao City, which I recognized as a significant upland development hub, characterized by strong agricultural production, emerging business ventures, and active marketplaces that cater to both locals and visitors. I noted that the district is home to various migrant and Indigenous groups, including the Badjao community, who have gradually transitioned from their traditional seafaring life to land-based livelihoods.

Sample and Sampling Technique

I focused this study on Badjao entrepreneurs in Calinan District who were at least 18 years old and had engaged in small-scale business for at least five years, ensuring rich and meaningful insights; only those willing to participate were included. I used purposive sampling, a non-probability technique that selects participants based on relevant characteristics to obtain in-depth information, particularly for complex or specialized groups. This approach is efficient and yields detailed data, though it does not allow for generalization (Campbell et al., 2020; Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data Gathering Technique

I employed in-depth interviews as a method of data collection in this study. In-depth interviews are a qualitative technique that involves one-on-one, open-ended conversations to explore participants' experiences, meanings, and perspectives in detail. It allows flexibility for probing and follow-up questions, enabling the researcher to gather rich, comprehensive insights into the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis Technique

I used thematic analysis to examine data from in-depth interviews. It is a qualitative method that identifies, organizes, and interprets patterns or themes within a dataset. This approach, valued for its flexibility, provides a rich and detailed understanding of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I followed the six (6) steps of thematic analysis to capture the essence of participants' perceptions. I familiarized myself with the data through repeated reading. I generalized initial codes, searching for themes by clustering related codes. I then reviewed and refined these themes to ensure they accurately represented the dataset. Finally, I defined and named the themes to clearly convey their meanings. This method was appropriate as it enabled a systematic and organized interpretation of the coping capacities of Indigenous people engaged in entrepreneurial activities outside their natural habitat.

Trustworthiness

In this study, I adhered to the four key elements of trustworthiness. I established credibility through prolonged engagement in the field and triangulation using interviews, in-depth conversations, and note-taking to ensure an accurate representation of participants' experiences (Johnson, 2022). I ensured transferability by providing sufficient contextual detail, allowing the findings to be meaningfully interpreted in other settings (Miller, 2020). I established dependability through the use of an audit trail, peer review, and careful verification of transcripts and translations. I also maintained confirmability by relying on participant data rather than personal bias, supported by triangulation and thorough documentation (Tobin & Beggley, 2019). These measures upheld the study's integrity and protected my participants' voices.

RESULTS

In this section, I presented the study's findings, focusing on the coping capacity of Indigenous People engaged in entrepreneurial activities outside their natural habitat. I also provided the summary of the findings along with the modified paradigm.

Cultural Endurance: Preservation sustains survival and ensures identity continuity

The theme of Cultural Endurance, defined as preservation sustaining survival and ensuring identity continuity, emerged from participants' perspectives and is reflected in three sub-themes: finding new ways to work and build connections, achieving stability through change and economic responsibility, and expanding opportunities and sources of livelihood.

On *Finding New Ways to Work and Build Connections*. This theme involves adapting livelihood strategies to changing conditions. In my conversations with the study participants, building and maintaining strong customer relationships emerged as a key strategy, highlighting how trust and rapport sustained their livelihood. As one participant explained:

"Diskarte ug amegahon ang mga customer para mahimo na nakong suki, hehehe. (Strategy and pampering customers so they can become my customers, hehehe.) – B1

The tone of her voice reflects the joyful culture of the Badjao people; that despite limited resources and knowledge, she still managed. Similarly, as one participant shared:

"Hehehe ...manawag rako, ihagad ang ukay-ukay na sapatos, kana ra. (Hehehe... I'll shout to buy ukay-ukay shoes, that's it.) – B4

I was struck by the simplicity and sincerity of his approach, which reflects the Badjao's culture of humility and practicality, where direct communication and honest effort are used to reach customers.

On *Expanding Opportunities and Sources of Livelihood*. This reflects how individuals maintain steady livelihoods by adapting to challenges while practicing responsible management of their resources and income. As one participant stated:

"Maglisod sa pagsugod kung wala kay puwesto ug mga customers. Kay kung gamay halin, igo ra sa pagkaun o erolling. (It's hard to start when you don't have a selling space and customers. If sales are small, the earnings are only enough for food or just to roll back into the business as capital.)" - B1

I noticed a subtle smile from him when I looked at him. However, behind the subtle smile lies a reflection of the Badjao's quiet strength and their ability to continue despite adversity. Likewise, the participant shows resilience in facing challenges. As one shared:

"Ang kalisod sa pagpangita ug mga customer mu palit sa mga gibaligya namu. Nya ang pagdaladala aning mga bakigya. Kami lang man sa akong asawa mamaligya tinabangay (The difficulty is finding customers who will buy the products we sell. We also have to carry all of these goods. It's just me and my wife helping each other sell.)" - B5

I could hear the participant's honest concern as he spoke about the difficulty of finding customers and the physical strain of carrying their goods, yet I could also sense his warmth and unity with his spouse. This reflects the Badjao's cultural endurance, as they continue to persevere through hardship by working together, showing resilience, cooperation, and a strong commitment to sustaining their livelihood despite limited resources. As one participant shared:

"Sauna ang pagpaningita ug nindot na pwesto. Nya karon kami naman gud nakapwesto ngadto, ang pagpaningkamot na pud nako na mahalinan/makabaligya) (Before, the struggle was really finding a good location. Now that we already have a spot there, my focus is on striving to make sales and earn.)" - B4

I felt a sense of relief and determination when I looked into his eyes as it sparkled when he shared his journey from struggling to find a good selling spot to focusing on making sales after securing one. This reflects the Badjao's culture of endurance, highlighting their adaptability, perseverance, and strong commitment to sustaining their livelihood despite challenges.

On *Finding Stability Through Change and Economic Responsibility*. Individuals maintain stability in their lives by adapting to changes while practicing responsible management of their resources and livelihood. As one participant stated:

"nakapundar ko. Sunod maayo unta makasakyanan nako kanang multicab na para kargahan sa mga baligya nako. (I was able to acquire something. Hopefully next time, I can own a vehicle, like a multicab, to carry my products.)" - B3

I felt a sense of hope as the participant shared his progress and aspiration on acquiring something and their goal of owning a multicab to his livelihood. The Badjao's cultural endurance, showing their perseverance and forward-looking determination to improve their economic situation. In the same way, one participant shared:

"Nakapaskwela ko sa akong anak maskin public ma'am kana bang naa nako mahatag na baon ug naa na sila makaon kun ting paniudto sa school nila. Naa na ipakaun sa pamilya. (I was able to send my child to school, even if it's a public school. Now I can give them allowance, and they have something to eat during lunchtime at school. There is already food for the family.)" - B2

As I reflected on his story, I felt a deep sense of pride and fulfillment as the participant shared their ability to send their child to school and provide for their daily needs. The Badjao culture reflects a strong sense of family responsibility and determination to ensure their children's well-being despite limited resources.

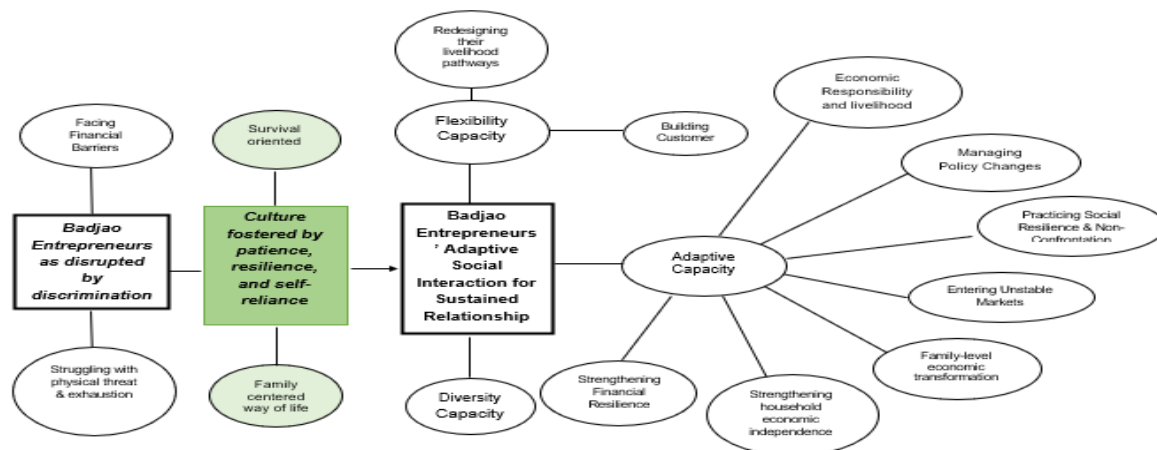
Summary of findings

The disruption for the Badjao entrepreneurs experience through persistent financial barriers that limit their access to capital and business opportunities, as well as the physical threats and exhaustion they endure from demanding daily work and unsafe condition.

Meanwhile, the social interaction of Badjao entrepreneurs is reflected in their flexibility and adaptive capacity, as they adjust their communication styles, build connections in diverse social settings, and respond effectively to changing customer behaviors and environments. Through this, they are able to maintain relationships and sustain livelihoods despite social challenges.

Despite discrimination, the Badjao entrepreneurs maintains sustain their social interaction resilience through their cultural endurance. The Badjao culture shaped by a survival-oriented and family-centered way of life, tuned which fosters patience, self-reliance, hard work, and persistence in their livelihood practices play important role in this resilience. Such culture is rooted in their fishing traditions and experiences of marginalization, they develop the ability to endure challenges, adapt to changing conditions, and rely on their own efforts to sustain their daily needs. These cultural values are reflected in their diverse livelihood activities, where perseverance and continuous effort enable them to support their families and maintain their way of life despite limited resources.

Modified Paradigm



DISCUSSION

In this discussion, I presented the findings based on the themes generated from the result of the study. I presented the implications for practice, and future direction of the study.

Badjao Entrepreneurs as disrupted by discrimination

I found out that the disruption for the Badjao entrepreneurs is characterized experience by persistent financial barriers that limit their access to capital and business opportunities, as well as the physical threats and exhaustion they endure from demanding daily work and unsafe conditions. This finding supports the study of Gonzales (2025) stating that Indigenous entrepreneurs face significant financial barriers, limited access to resources, and lack of business support, which contains their ability to sustain and grow their enterprises. Likewise, my finding also affirms the contention of Fuentes-Contreras et. al (2026), who revealed that Indigenous entrepreneurs experience structural inequalities such as limited access to capital, weak social networks, and discrimination, which negatively affect their business performance and opportunities.

On the other hand, my study contrasts the idea of Anderson and Dana (2023), that Indigenous entrepreneurs can leverage cultural values and external support to build thriving and sustainable enterprises rather than being primarily disrupted by constraints. While, the claim of Anderson and Dana was based on non-empirical study, my assertion was based on scientific inquiry.

Badjao Entrepreneurs' Adaptive and Flexible Social Interaction for Sustained Relationships

I came to understand that Badjao Entrepreneurs' adaptive and flexible social interactions help maintain a strong relationship, enabling them to sustain their livelihood despite social challenges. My finding aligns with the study of Dana (2023), which explained indigenous entrepreneurs rely on strong interpersonal relationships and social adaptability to maintain trust with customers and sustain their livelihoods, emphasizing the role of flexibility in social interactions. Similarly, my finding also supports the study of Anderson and Ratten (2024), who emphasized that marginalized entrepreneurs often use adaptive communication and relationship-building strategies to navigate diverse social environments and ensure continued access to opportunities and markets.

In contrast, my study contradicts with the assertion of Khan et. al (2023), who explained that social exclusion and lack of trust in communities can restrict effective communication and reduce

opportunities for collaboration, resulting in weaker social ties rather than adaptive and flexible interactions. The study of Khan et. al., does not specify the location or number of respondents, whereas the finding of my study is situated in the Philippine context.

Badjao culture fosters patience, resilience, and self-reliance

In doing this research, I found out that, Badjao culture is shaped by a survival-oriented and family-centered way of life, which fosters patience, self-reliance, hard work, and persistence in their livelihood practices. Rooted in their maritime traditions and experiences of marginalization, they develop the ability to endure challenges, adapt to changing conditions, and rely on their own efforts to sustain their daily needs. These cultural values are reflected in their diverse livelihood activities, where perseverance and continuous effort enable them to support their families and maintain their way of life despite limited resources. My finding agrees with the statements of Ungar (2018), saying that cultural traditions and shared values promote resilience and self-reliance, enabling them to cope with hardships while maintaining their identity and way of life. In the same way, my finding also collaborates with the claim of Pugh (2020), stating that their way of life encourages patience, perseverance, and independence, as they rely on skills and continuous effort to sustain their livelihood despite limited resources.

Nonetheless, my finding contradicts the study of Usman and Bacongus (2016), who explained that Badjao communities in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi experience persistent poverty, where multiple factors create a “deprivation trap” that keeps them in poverty. While their reflects earlier conditions, my study presents more recent finding.

Implication for Practice

Upon reflecting on the modified paradigm, local government may review existing indigenous education policies and give greater consideration to the plight of the Badjao. This may strengthen their cultural endurance, address discrimination as a disruptive phenomenon, and promote social interaction resilience essential for entrepreneurial survival. Likewise, educational leaders may strengthen culturally appropriate teaching methods guided by the Department of Education and enhance community extension programs to showcase Badjao skills, talents, music, and traditions. These efforts may support culturally responsive interventions that promote sustainable livelihood, education, and social resilience.

Future Directions

In my research I have identified exploratory factor analysis to develop instruments for discrimination as disruption; patience, resilience, and self-reliance; and Adaptive Social Interaction for Sustained Relationship. Utilize the emerging sub-themes of my research as indicators for the EFA research. Moreover, mediation analysis may be pursued using patience, resilience, and self-reliance as mediating variable.

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