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Animistic Customs and Practices, Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects, and Environmentalism in an Informal Settler Riverside Community in Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines

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Abstract

This research explored the potential of animism as a framework for strengthening environmental initiatives. It examined the connection between animism and environmentalism in an informal settler riverside community in the Philippines. The findings revealed the presence of Filipino animistic customs and practices, the generally high attribution of animistic essence to natural objects, and the moderate attribution of animistic essence to manmade objects among respondents. Moreover, environmentalism and its dimensions were found to be remarkably high. The researchers also found significant relationships between some animistic customs and practices and environmentalism, as well as between attribution of

animistic essence to some objects and environmentalism. While certain animistic customs and practices exhibited positive correlations with environmentalism, the strength of these relationships remained modest. The absence of significant relationship between some variables and a few negative correlations suggested that not the entirety of animism is beneficial to environmentalism. The researchers proposed for the development of a culture-based environmental program that may preserve significant animistic customs and practices and enhance the attribution of animistic essence to animals and plants to strengthen cultural identity and contribute significantly to the conservation and preservation of the natural environment.

Keywords: Animism, Customs and Practices, Attribution, Animistic Essence, Environmentalism

Introduction

Human-driven climate change, fueled by greenhouse gas emissions and habitat loss, pushes temperatures beyond safe levels, disrupting ecosystems and biodiversity. This, combined with rampant wildlife exploitation and habitat destruction, erodes nature's ability to support human well-being, food security, and development, leading to increased vulnerability (Pörtner *et al.*, 2023) ^[39]. Humanity stands at a crossroad facing environmental crises of unimaginable scale and is obligated to confront the dire consequences of its interaction with the planet (Einhorn, 2020) ^[14].

The prevailing westernized mindset, built on human-centricity and a mechanistic view of nature, has fueled exploitation and environmental decay (Muradian & Gómez-Baggethun, 2021; Pearce, 2023) ^[32, 37]. This situation calls for alternative perspectives that can bridge the gap between humans and the natural world to pave way for a more harmonious and sustainable future (Harvey, 2019; Mekonen, 2020; Ochoa, 2021) ^[19, 30, 35].

In sharp contrast to the western view of the world, animism attributes life to all things. To the animist, as articulated by Naidu (2011) ^[33] and Waldrep (2018) ^[51], non-human entities can even exert their influence on human lives and events. Nevertheless, while the attribution of animistic essence to objects binds animistic societies around the globe, it is crucial to remember that animism is not a singular, codified belief system. As Harvey (2019) ^[19], Park (2021) ^[36], Pearce (2023) ^[37], and Swancutt (2019) ^[47] aptly point out, it is more of a complex cultural phenomenon, woven from diverse threads of beliefs and practices, embodying uniqueness that emanates from each societal context.

Usually, the animist is driven by fear and endeavors to pacify, avoid, or exert influence over the perceived spiritual forces that linger around him (Clemons, 2014) ^[10]. The fear of the supernatural is brought about by his intuitive concepts on the duality of mind and body and his animistic view of objects (Coelho *et al.*, 2021) ^[9]. Thus, even the seemingly unstoppable forces like capitalist development may require the officiation of animistic rituals. This is evident in practices like appeasing local spirits

before land development or employing spiritual guides to persuade miners to descend into dangerous working conditions. Consequently, some rituals are increasingly becoming commercialized and commodified (Kleinod-Freudenberg *et al.*, 2022)^[23].

Confronted by escalating environmental challenges, animism emerges as a promising paradigm, challenging the predominant western conceptualization of human-nature relations (Van Eyghen, 2023; Enstedt & Moberg, 2023; Perdibon, 2019)^[48, 15, 38]. Within animistic cultures, the natural world transcends a mere resource to be exploited; rather, it embodies a living symphony that commands reverence. This inherent respect, intricately woven into customs and practices, has perpetuated a complex interplay between human necessities and the imperative for environmental sustainability (Harvey, 2019; Kunchambo *et al.*, 2021; Mumcu & Yilmaz, 2018)^[19, 26, 31].

Animistic cultures attribute spirits to objects. This belief goes beyond mere animation, suggesting these inanimate things possess sentience or the ability to think and feel more or less like humans do. Objects are also seen as having distinct personalities and even the ability to act independently. Animism imbues objects with a sense of agency, blurring the lines between the living and the non-living. The attribution of animistic essence fosters a deep respect and connection with the wider environment, leading to practices like offering thanks before taking something from nature or treating cherished objects with reverence (Latayan & Latayan, 2024)^[27]. While not universally accepted, animism offers a unique perspective on the world, where everything holds a spark of life within.

In the Philippines, long before colonialism arrived, animism thrived. This ancient system of beliefs painted the natural world as teeming with spirits, the anitos. They were thought to reside in trees, rocks, rivers, and even in the unseen realm of dreams and omens (Acac, 2020; Cervantes, 2023; Eslit, 2023; Vicerra & Javier, 2013)^[1, 7, 16, 50].

In every generation, Filipinos continue with the tradition of animism, keeping its flame alive through a myriad of expressions. Today, the pulse of animism beats strong in diverse the Filipino society, its rhythm echoing in a kaleidoscope of practices, rituals, and traditions. From humble offerings and whispered prayers to venerated groves and ancestral ceremonies, animism weaves its way through the lives of many, reminding them of the invisible threads that bind all things (Cabas, 2017; Del Castillo *et al.*, 2023; Nelmida-Flores, 2021; & Quilo *et al.*, 2015)^[4, 13, 34, 42].

Despite Christianity and other beliefs painting their hues on Filipino spirituality, animism remains a vibrant thread, deeply woven into the very fabric of everyday life. The presence of this spiritual essence becomes apparent through rites, offerings, and the profound recognition that the visible and invisible realms are intricately intertwined (Casiño, 2013; Macaranas, 2021)^[5, 29].

Common animistic customs and practices among Filipinos include uttering "tabi-tabi po, nuno" ("excuse me, old man"), an invocation to avoid offending spirits in nature; asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment; consulting and getting treatment from an albularyo or folk healer; praying to and worshipping statues or images; and interpreting a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one. Less frequent customs and practices include asking nature spirits to bring about bountiful harvest or catch; praying to nature spirits;

worshipping Mariang Makiling, a goddess-like mountain spirit; using amulets; and using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits (Latayan & Latayan, 2024)^[27]. In contemporary discourse, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the prospective contribution of animistic perspectives to the enhancement of environmentalism. Scholars have underscored the alignment between animistic values and prevalent environmentalist principles in the contemporary context, including but not limited to, the reverence for nature, holistic cognition, and interconnectedness (Allison, 2019; & Cassar, 2023)^[2, 6]. The emphasis within animism on the spiritual and relational facets of the natural world serves as a valuable counterbalance to the frequently observed technocratic and instrumentalist tendencies inherent in western environmentalist approaches (Pierce, 2021; Quijada, 2022^[41]; Selby, 2017^[44]; & Sponsel, 2014^[45]).

Environmentalism can be defined as a complex construct encompassing both pro-environmental attitudes and proactive behavior towards the natural world (Armstrong, 2019; Davis, 2020; Funk and Kennedy, 2016)^[3, 12, 17]. At its core, it hinges on a deeply ingrained sense of responsibility for the planet's well-being. This responsibility emerges from an awareness of the interconnectedness within ecosystems and an acknowledgement of the potential for human activities to disrupt this delicate balance (Cruz and Manata, 2020; Gnansounou and Pandey, 2017; Weyler, 2018)^[11, 18, 52]. Individuals embracing environmentalism as a concern prioritize the planet's health, recognizing the delicate web of life that sustains all ecosystems. This concern extends beyond individual needs and wants, fostering a holistic perspective that values biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, and the overarching protection of nature's complexities.

It is crucial to recognize that environmentalism is not merely a passive stance of concern. It demands active and tangible efforts to address the complex challenges confronting our planet. This action-oriented dimension encompasses a broad spectrum of initiatives, spanning individual endeavors like carbon footprint reduction and mindful waste management to collective undertakings such as advocating for robust environmental policies, engaging in hands-on conservation projects, and championing sustainable practices (Kumar *et al.*, 2021; Leicht *et al.*, 2018; Prastio *et al.*, 2023)^[25, 28, 40]. Environmental activism acts as a critical bridge between concern and impactful change, enabling individuals and communities to collaboratively tackle pressing issues like deforestation, pollution, and habitat loss. As concern translates into action, environmentalism emerges as a dynamic force propelling positive transformations in the way societies interact with and safeguard the natural world (Chu & Karr, 2016; Iqbal, Ahmad, & Halim, 2020; Kiper, 2013; Strand *et al.*, 2020)^[8, 21, 22, 46].

Acknowledging the inherent spiritual and cultural significance of nature, animistic conservation approaches leverage the fundamental interconnectedness between stakeholder values and the natural world. Integrating diverse cultural perspectives regarding land, resources, and social constructs fosters sustainable governance models. Comprehending the cultural and spiritual importance of nature is an essential prerequisite for the efficacy of any environmental program.

The inclusion of cultural values within strategies for managing and protecting the natural environment reflects a more holistic and inclusive approach to conservation. Recognizing the intrinsic interwovenness of nature, culture, and spirituality, a balanced and culturally sensitive approach fortifies the sustainability and success of conservation initiatives (Verschuuren *et al.*, 2021)^[49].

This research proposes that animism is offering a comprehensive and ethically grounded framework for understanding and addressing environmental challenges. By attributing spirit, sentience, and personhood in all things, intertwined with the interconnectedness of the cosmos, animism cultivates a profound sense of kinship and responsibility towards the natural world. This deep respect for nature motivates animistic communities to live in harmonious co-existence with their environment, adopting sustainable practices that maintain ecological balance (Honegger, 2015; Kopnina, 2019; Sadowski, 2020; Zhu *et al.*, 2022)^[20, 24, 43, 53].

This research argues that integrating animistic perspectives can infuse contemporary environmentalism with renewed vigor and depth. By embracing animistic values and insights, environmentalism can transcend its anthropocentric limitations and cultivate a more holistic and reverent relationship with nature. This integration has the potential to catalyze the development of more effective and sustainable environmental policies and practices. This work serves as a testament to the profound significance of animism in navigating environmental challenges. By shining light on the harmonious interdependence fostered by animistic traditions, it offers a valuable contribution to the pursuit of environmental sustainability and a more respectful co-existence with the natural world.

Inspired by previous studies suggesting connection between animism and environmentalism, this research aimed to empirically validate and elucidate on this kind of relationship. The quantitative approach sought to provide strong evidence supporting the theoretical frameworks underpinning the animistic environmental ethos.

Specifically, this research intended to determine: 1. the animistic customs and practices of the respondents; 2. the level of attribution of animistic essence to objects of the respondents in terms of animals, plants, non-living natural objects, natural places, forces of nature, manmade materials, manmade places, and words; 3. the level of environmentalism of respondents in terms of concern for nature, action for nature, and overall environmentalism; 4. if there is a significant relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism; and, 5. if there is a significant relationship between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism.

In relation to the research objectives, the following hypotheses were crafted: 1. There is no significant relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism. 2. There is no significant relationship between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative methodology, specifically utilizing a combination of descriptive and correlational methods. The descriptive method sought to determine the presence of animistic customs and practices, the level of attribution of animistic essence to objects, and

the level of environmentalism. The correlational method was utilized in determining the magnitude and direction of the relationship between animism and environmentalism.

From a population of 200 adult individuals residing in an informal settler riverside community in Barangay Real, Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines, a sample size of 132 was selected as respondents of research. This study employed simple random sampling, ensuring that each member of the target population had an equal chance of being selected. Data was collected through individual survey interviews, utilizing a self-developed questionnaire.

The questionnaire comprised three distinct sections. The first section identified and assessed animistic customs and practices. The second section assessed the attribution of animistic essence to objects in terms of animals, plants, non-living natural objects, natural places, forces of nature, manmade materials, manmade places, and words. The third section assessed environmentalism in terms of concern, action for nature, and overall environmentalism.

Frequency distributions, percentage counts, and rankings were employed to analyze the data related to animistic customs and practices, providing bases for insights about the prevalence of these cultural elements within the sample. The study calculated the mean level of agreement for each indicative statement, allowing for the quantification of both attribution of animistic essence and environmentalism. These scales used a five-point range, categorized as very low (1.00-1.79), low (1.80-2.59), moderate (2.60-3.39), high (3.40-4.19), and very high (4.20-5.00).

Point biserial correlation was employed to investigate the relationship between animistic beliefs and practices and environmentalism. To investigate the relationship between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism, the study employed Pearson correlation coefficient analysis. These statistical tools provided insights into the magnitude and direction of the relationship, categorized using a standard range of strength: Very weak (± 0.00 to ± 0.19), weak (± 0.20 to ± 0.39), moderate (± 0.40 to ± 0.59), strong (± 0.60 to ± 0.79), and very strong (± 0.80 to ± 1.00).

Results

The statistical treatment of data, in relation to the research questions, yielded the following results:

Table 1: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 1-5)

Rank No.	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
1	Uttering "tabi-tabi po, nuno" ("excuse me, old man", an invocation to avoid offending spirits in nature)	122	92.42
2	Considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one	113	85.61
3	Asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment	112	84.85
4	Pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or aswangs (supernatural monsters)	110	83.33
5	Burning incense to drive away evil spirits	109	82.58

Table 1 shows the animistic customs and practices from rank 1 to rank 5 with their frequencies and percentage

counts of responses. Of all the animistic customs and practices of the respondents, “uttering ‘tabi-tabi po, nuno’ (“excuse me, old man”, an invocation to avoid offending spirits in nature)” was ranked number one due to the highest frequency of responses at 122 which was 92.42% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 2 was “considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one” with a frequency of 113 (85.61%). Ranked 3 was “asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment” with a frequency of 112 (84.85%). Ranked 4 was “pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or aswangs (supernatural monsters)” with a frequency of 110 (83.33%). Ranked 5 was “burning incense to drive away evil spirits” with a frequency of 109 (82.58%).

Table 2: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 6-10)

Rank No.	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
6	Refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits	105	79.55
7	Refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits	104	78.79
8	Offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings	103	78.03
9	Refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits	97	73.48
10	Consulting and getting treatment from an albularyo or folk healer	96	72.73

Table 2 shows the animistic customs and practices from rank 6 to rank 10 with their corresponding frequencies and percentage counts of responses. Among the animistic customs and practices, “refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits” was ranked number 6 with a frequency of 105 which was 79.55% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 7 was “refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits” with a frequency of 104 (78.79%). Ranked 8 was “offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings” with a frequency of 103 (78.03%). Having a frequency of 97 (73.48%), “refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits” was ranked 9. Ranked 10 was “consulting and getting treatment from an albularyo or folk healer” with a frequency of 96 (72.73%).

Table 3: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 11-15)

Rank No.	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
11	Blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them	95	71.97
12	Turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits	93	70.45
13	Praying to and worshipping statues or images	88	66.67
14	Communicating or interacting with the dead	87	65.91
15	Carrying some amount of salt to protect self from aswangs	82	62.12

Table 3 shows the animistic customs and practices from rank 11 to rank 15 with the corresponding frequencies and

percentage counts of responses. “Blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them” had a frequency of 95 which was 71.97% of the total number of respondents and was ranked number 11 among the animistic customs and practices. Ranked 12 was “turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits” with a frequency of 93 (70.45%). Ranked 13 was “praying to and worshipping statues or images” with a frequency of 88 (66.67%). Having a frequency of 87 (65.91%), “communicating or interacting with the dead” was ranked 14. Ranked 15 was “carrying some amount of salt to protect self from aswangs” with a frequency of 82 (62.12%).

Table 4: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 16-20)

Rank No.	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
16	Using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits	67	50.76
17	Praying to nature spirits	60	45.45
18	Asking nature spirits to bring about bountiful harvest or catch	50	37.88
19	Worshipping Mariang Makiling (a goddess-like mountain spirit)	39	29.55
20	Using amulets	33	25.00

Table 4 shows the animistic customs and practices from rank 16 to rank 20 with their corresponding frequencies and percentages of responses. Among the animistic customs and practices of the respondents, “using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits” was ranked number 16 with a frequency of 67 or 50.76% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 17 was “praying to nature spirits” with a frequency of 60 (45.45%). Ranked 18 was “asking nature spirits to bring about bountiful harvest or catch” with a frequency of 50 (37.88%). Having a frequency of 39 (29.55%), “worshipping Mariang Makiling, (a goddess-like mountain spirit)” was ranked 19. Ranked 20 due to the lowest frequency of 33 (25.00%), “using amulets” came out last among the animistic customs and practices.

Table 5: Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects

Objects	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Animals	4.41	Very High
Plants	4.15	High
Non-Living Natural Objects	3.75	High
Natural Places	3.68	High
Forces of Nature	3.50	High
Manmade Materials	2.79	Moderate
Manmade Places	2.71	Moderate
Words	2.96	Moderate

Table 5 shows the attribution of animistic essence to objects with their respective means and verbal interpretations. Attribution of animistic essence to animals had a mean of 4.41 which was interpreted as very high. Attribution of animistic essence to plants had a mean of 4.15 which was interpreted as high. Interpreted as high, attribution of animistic essence to non-living natural objects yielded a mean of 3.75. Attribution of animistic essence to natural places exhibited a mean of 3.68 which was interpreted as high. Attribution of animistic essence to forces of nature had

a mean of 3.50 which was interpreted as high. Interpreted as moderate, attribution of animistic essence to manmade materials had a mean of 2.79. Attribution of animistic essence to manmade places had a mean of 2.71 which was interpreted as moderate. Finally, attribution of animistic essence to words had a mean of 2.96 which was also interpreted as moderate.

Table 6: Levels of Environmentalism

Environmentalism	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Concern for nature	4.30	Very High
Action for nature	4.15	High
Overall	4.22	Very High

Table 6 shows the levels of environmentalism among respondents. Environmentalism in terms of concern for nature exhibited a mean of 4.30 which was interpreted as very high. Environmentalism in terms of action for nature had a mean of 4.15 which was interpreted as high. Overall environmentalism was found to be very high as indicated by a mean of 4.22.

Table 7: Significant Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 1-5) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern	Action	Overall
1. Uttering "tabi-tabi po, nuno"	.295** Weak	.294** Weak	.320** Weak
2. Considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one	.359** Weak	.202* Weak	.309** Weak
3. Asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment	0.085 Very Weak	.219* Weak	0.162 Very Weak
4. Pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or aswangs	0.038 Very Weak	0.016 Very Weak	0.03 Very Weak
5. Burning incense to drive away evil spirits	-0.075 Very Weak	-0.059 Very Weak	-0.073 Very Weak

**highly significant if p-value ≤ .01
* significant if p-value ≤ .05

Table 7 presents the significant relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 1-5) and environmentalism. "Uttering 'tabi-tabi po, nuno'" and environmentalism in terms of concern, action for nature, and the overall exhibited highly significant relationships with weak correlations of .295, .294, and .320 respectively. "Considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one" and environmentalism in terms of concern for nature and the overall indicated highly significant relationships with weak correlations of .359 and .309 respectively. The same custom and practice and environmentalism in terms of action for nature had a significant relationship with a weak correlation of .202. A significant relationship was found between "asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment" and environmentalism in terms of action for nature with a weak correlation of .219. No significant relationship was found between environmentalism and "pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or aswangs" and "burning incense to drive away evil spirits".

Table 8: Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 6-10) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern	Action	Overall
6. Refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits	-0.012 Very Weak	0.096 Very Weak	0.043 Very Weak
7. Refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits	0.079 Very Weak	0.104 Very Weak	0.099 Very Weak
8. Offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings	-0.008 Very Weak	-0.023 Very Weak	-0.017 Very Weak
9. Refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits	-0.044 Very Weak	0.033 Very Weak	-0.008 Very Weak
10. Consulting and getting treatment from an albularyo or folk healer	-0.062 Very Weak	0.001 Very Weak	-0.035 Very Weak

Table 8 presents the relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 6-10) and environmentalism. No significant relationship was found between environmentalism and the following customs and practices: "refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits", "refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits", "offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings", "refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits", and "consulting and getting treatment from an albularyo or folk healer".

Table 9: Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 11-15) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern	Action	Overall
11. Blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them	-0.052 Very Weak	-0.049 Very Weak	-0.055 Very Weak
12. Turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits	0.116 Very Weak	0.054 Very Weak	0.094 Very Weak
13. Communicating or interacting with the dead	-0.022 Very Weak	0.02 Very Weak	-0.002 Very Weak
14. Praying to and worshipping statues or images	0.01 Very Weak	0.013 Very Weak	0.012 Very Weak
15. Carrying some amount of salt to protect self from aswangs	-0.065 Very Weak	-0.019 Very Weak	-0.047 Very Weak

Table 9 presents the relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 11-15) and environmentalism. No significant relationship was found between environmentalism and the following customs and practices: "blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them", "turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits", "communicating or interacting with the dead", "praying to and worshipping statues or images", and "carrying some amount of salt to protect self from aswangs".

Table 10: Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 16-20) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern	Action	Overall
16. Using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits	-0.029	-0.106	-0.072
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
17. Praying to nature spirits	-0.028	0.001	-0.015
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
18. Asking nature spirits to bring about bountiful harvest or catch	-0.025	-0.059	-0.045
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
19. Worshipping Mariang Makiling	0.059	0.111	0.091
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
20. Using amulets	0.07	0.069	0.076
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak

Table 10 shows the relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 16-20) and environmentalism. No significant relationship was found between environmentalism and the following customs and practices: “using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits,” “praying to nature spirits,” “asking nature spirits to bring about bountiful harvest or catch,” “worshipping Mariang Makiling”, and “using amulets”.

Table 11: Significant Relationships between the Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects and Environmentalism

Animism Objects	Environmentalism		
	Concern for Nature	Action for Nature	Overall
Animals	.293**	0.151	.245**
	Weak	Very Weak	Weak
Plants	.230**	0.132	.199*
	Weak	Very Weak	Weak
Non-living Natural Objects	0.073	-0.094	-0.007
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
Natural Places	-0.031	-.181*	-0.112
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
Forces of Nature	-0.058	-.192*	-0.133
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
Manmade Materials	-.184*	-0.141	-.178*
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
Manmade Places	-0.058	-0.1	-0.085
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
Words	-0.136	-0.095	-0.126
	Very Weak	Very Weak	Very Weak
** highly significant if p-value ≤ .01 * significant if p-value ≤ .05			

Table 11 shows significant relationships between the attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism. Relationships between attribution of animistic essence to animals and concern for nature and the overall were highly significant with weak correlations of .293 and .245 respectively. Relationship between attribution

of animistic essence to plants and concern for nature was highly significant with a weak correlation of .230. Relationship between attribution of animistic essence to plants and the overall was significant with a weak correlation of .199. Relationship between attribution of animistic essence to natural places and action for nature was significant with a weak correlation of -.181. Relationship between attribution of animistic essence to forces of nature and environmentalism in terms of action for nature was significant with a weak correlation of -.192. Relationships between attribution of animistic essence to manmade materials and environmentalism in terms of concern for nature and the overall were significant with weak correlations of -.184 and -.178 respectively. No significant relationship was found between environmentalism and non-living natural objects, manmade places, and words.

Discussions

In relation to the research objective of determining animistic customs and practices among respondents, the following cultural elements were found and were arranged according to the number of responses from the highest frequency to the lowest: “uttering ‘tabi-tabi po, nuno’”, “considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one”, “asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment”, “pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or aswangs”, “burning incense to drive away evil spirits”, “refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits”, “refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits”, “offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings”, “refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits”, “consulting and getting treatment from an albularyo or folk healer”, “blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them”, “turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits”, “communicating or interacting with the dead”, “praying to and worshipping statues or images”, “carrying some amount of salt to protect self from aswangs”, “using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits”, “praying to nature spirits”, “asking nature spirits to bring about bountiful harvest or catch”, “worshipping Mariang Makiling”, and “using amulets”.

The animistic customs and practices among respondents found through this research were similar to those found by Latayan & Latayan (2024)^[27] in an upland rural community. These customs and practices also resonated the articulations of various authors such as Mumcu & Yilmaz (2018)^[31], Harvey (2019)^[19], Naidu (2011)^[33], Park (2021)^[36], Pearce (2023)^[37], Swancutt (2019)^[47], and Waldrep (2018)^[51] that regarded similar cultural traits as integral parts of animism. Some of the animistic customs and practices unique to Filipinos like those mentioned by Acac (2020)^[1], Cabas (2017)^[4], Cervantes (2013), Eslit (2023)^[16], Casiño (2013)^[5], Del Castillo *et al.* (2023)^[13], Macaranas (2021)^[29], Nelmidia-Flores (2021)^[34], Vicerra & Javier (2013)^[50], and Quilo *et al.* (2015)^[42] were also similar to the findings of this research.

In relation to the research objective of determining the level of attribution of animistic essence to objects, the following findings were obtained: Attribution of animistic essence to animals, plants, non-living natural objects, natural places,

and forces of nature were generally high, and attribution of animistic essence to manmade materials, manmade places, and words were moderate.

Aligned with the articulations of Naidu (2011) [33], Park (2021) [36], Pearce (2023) [37], Swancutt (2019) [47], and Waldrep (2018) [51] which maintain animism as a worldview that considers objects as having spirit, sentience, and personhood, the present research found attribution of animistic essence to non-human objects. However, the findings of high level of attribution on natural elements were remarkably different from the findings of Latayan & Latayan (2024) [27] that only showed high level of attribution in animals only. The difference in the findings may be due to the varying intervening factors between an upland rural community and an informal settler riverside community such as livelihood, family income, and availability of natural resources to be exploited.

In relation to the research objective of determining the level of environmentalism in terms of concern, action for nature, and the overall, it was found that environmentalism in the three dimensions were generally very high.

The results on environmentalism are akin to the articulations of Allison (2019) [2], Cassar (2023) [6], Selby (2017) [44], Sponsel (2014) [45], and Quijada (2022) [41] on how animists are inclined to live in harmony with nature. However, in contrast with the previous studies which were qualitative, the present research ascertained the three dimensions of environmentalism in quantitative terms similar to the research of Latayan & Latayan (2024) [27].

In relation to the research objective of determining significant relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism, the following results were determined: “uttering ‘tabi-tabi po, nuno” and environmentalism in terms of concern, action for nature, and overall environmentalism exhibited high significant relationships with weak positive correlations; “considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one” and environmentalism in terms of concern for nature and the overall exhibited high significant relationships with weak positive correlations; the same custom and environmentalism in terms of action for nature had a significant relationship with a weak positive correlation; a significant relationship was found between “asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment” and environmentalism in terms of action for nature with a weak positive correlation; and no significant relationship was found between the rest of the animistic customs and practices and environmentalism. These findings led the researchers to conclude that the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism was partially upheld.

The significant relationships between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism conform with the narratives of Allison (2019) [2], Enstedt & Moberg (2023) [15], Cassar (2023) [6], Harvey (2019) [19], Honegger (2015) [20], Kopnina (2019) [24], Mumcu & Yilmaz (2018) [31], Perdibon (2019) [38], Quijada (2022) [41], Sadowski (2020) [43], Selby (2017) [44], Sponsel (2014) [45], Van Eyghen (2023) [48], and Zhu *et al.* (2022) [53] on animist communities revering the natural environment and preserving the balance between human activities and abundance of nature. However, despite the significant relationships found between some customs and practices and environmentalism, majority of the animistic

cultural elements did not exhibit any significant relationship with the second major variable. The findings of non-significance between some of the variables are similar to the findings of Latayan & Latayan (2024) [27]. It may be inferred, therefore, that not everything about animism is promoting environmentalism. Moreover, animistic customs and practices that were significantly related to environmentalism exhibited weak correlations. The low correlation levels might have been due to factors such as commercialization, dominant religion, westernization, and secular views and values. These factors are somewhat related to forces affecting animism as explained by Acac (2020) [1], Casiño (2013) [5], Del Castillo *et al.* (2023) [13], Kleinod-Freudenberg *et al.* (2022) [23], Latayan & Latayan (2024) [27], Macaranas (2021) [29], Pierce (2021), Quijada (2022) [41], Selby (2017) [44], Sponsel (2014) [45], and Vicerra & Javier (2013) [50].

The partial upholding of the hypothesis shows a multifaceted connection between animism and environmentalism. Nevertheless, the existence of significant relationships between the variables suggests that the observance of certain animistic customs and practices fosters environmentalism.

With respect to the research objective of determining significant relationship between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism, the following findings were established: Relationships between attribution of animistic essence to animals and environmentalism in terms of concern for nature and overall environmentalism were highly significant with weak positive correlations; relationship between attribution of animistic essence to plants and environmentalism in terms of concern for nature was highly significant with a weak positive correlation; relationship between attribution of animistic essence to plants and overall environmentalism was significant with a weak positive correlation; relationship between attribution of animistic essence to natural places and environmentalism in terms of action for nature was significant with a weak negative correlation; relationship between attribution of animistic essence to forces of nature and environmentalism in terms of action for nature was significant with a weak negative correlation; relationships between attribution of animistic essence to manmade materials and environmentalism in terms of concern for nature and the overall were significant with weak negative correlations; and no significant relationship was found between environmentalism and non-living natural objects, manmade places, and words. These findings led the researchers to conclude that the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism was partially upheld.

The findings on the significant relationships between attribution of animistic essence to objects in the case of animals and plants and the dimensions of environmentalism abide by the narratives of Naidu (2011) [33], Park (2021) [36], Pearce (2023) [37], Swancutt (2019) [47], and Waldrep (2018) [51] concerning animism being seen as a worldview that attributes spirit, personhood, and sentience to non-human entities and the idea that these things can influence human actions and events. The findings of no significant relationship, the weak positive correlations, and the negative correlations, albeit weak, between some attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism are

similar to the findings of Latayan & Latayan (2024) ^[27]. These findings strengthen idea that not everything about animism fosters environmentalism.

The weak positive correlations between most of the attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism may be explained by influences associated with commercialization, religion, westernization, and secular values and perspectives. These influences are akin to those affecting animism as reflected in the works of Acac (2020) ^[1], Casiño (2013) ^[5], Del Castillo *et al.* (2023) ^[13], Kleinod-Freudenberg *et al.* (2022) ^[23], Latayan & Latayan (2024) ^[27], Macaranas (2021) ^[29], Pierce (2021), Quijada (2022) ^[41], Selby (2017) ^[44], Sponsel (2014) ^[45], and Vicerra & Javier (2013) ^[50]. The negative correlations, though weak, meant that the increase in the degree of attribution of animistic essence to natural places, forces of nature, and manmade materials resulted to the decrease in certain aspects environmentalism or vice versa. The animist might have viewed natural places, forces of nature, manmade materials as beyond human control and had the ability to fend for themselves in the face of destructive human activities (Latayan & Latayan, 2024) ^[27]. Thus, the more the respondent attributed animistic essence to natural places, forces of nature, and manmade materials, the less he was concerned or acting to conserve such objects. Such a view aligns with how animists view objects as having differing animistic traits as implied by Harvey (2019) ^[19], Park (2021) ^[36], and Swancutt (2019) ^[47]. Another possible reason behind the negative correlation is that the respondents might be fearing the spirits that they thought were dwelling in natural places, forces of nature, and manmade materials. For example, the more the animist thinks that evil spirits lurk in a cave littered with trash from nature-trippers, the less he would want to participate in a cleanup drive meant for the preservation of that place. Such behavior may be attributed to the animist being motivated by fear, and always attempting to soothe, evade, or wield influence over the perceived spirits that surround him (Clemons, 2014) ^[10].

The partial upholding of the hypothesis between the attribution of animistic essence to some objects and the concern, action for the environment, and overall environmentalism showed the complexity of the relationship between animism and environmentalism. While some animistic beliefs clearly foster ecological concern and action, others have nuanced or even negative influence on environmentalism. Nevertheless, the research revealed that attributing animistic essence to specific objects, particularly living entities, is linked to intensifying environmentalism. This underscored the valuable role animism played in shaping a more respectful and responsible relationship between humans and nature as mentioned by Harvey (2019) ^[19], Mekonen (2020) ^[30], Mumcu & Yilmaz (2018) ^[31], Ochoa (2021) ^[35], Pearce (2023) ^[37], and Kunchambo *et al.* (2021) ^[26].

Based on the findings and conclusions of research, the observance of some animistic customs and practices may be strengthened at least among the residents of an informal settler riverside community in Barangay Real to further enhance environmentalism. These animistic customs and practices may include “uttering ‘tabi-tabi po, nuno’”, “considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one”, and “asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment”. The attribution of

animistic essence to animals and plants may also be fostered to further promote environmentalism. In relation to strengthening the observance of some animistic customs and practices and the attribution of animistic essence to animals and plants, a culture-based environmentalist values enhancement program may be established by a concerned agency or organization. The development of such program has the potential to not only strengthen cultural identity but also contribute significantly to the conservation and preservation of the natural environment.

Future researchers may explore the nuanced conditions between animism and environmentalism by searching for factors that significantly moderate such relationships. In doing so, they may understand better the complexities between the variables to come up with ways on how to strengthen animistic traits while promoting environmentalism.

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