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Animistic Customs and Practices, Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects, and Environmentalism in an Upland Rural Community in Labo, Camarines Norte, Philippines

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between animism and environmentalism in an upland rural community in Labo, Camarines Norte, Philippines. A survey of 136 adults identified prevalent animistic customs and practices, moderate attribution of animistic essence to various objects, and high levels of environmental concern and action. Significant positive correlations emerged between some customs and practices and environmentalism, suggesting that certain practices may promote concern and action for ecology. However, the strength of these correlations was generally weak. This could be due to external factors like commercialization, dominant religion, and secularization, which weaken the connection between customs and practices and environmentalism. The attribution of animistic essence to animals and plants displayed a positive relationship with environmentalism, suggesting a link

between valuing living things and pro-environmental behavior. Conversely, attributing essence to most of the object categories did not yield significant relationships. These findings highlight the complex relationship between animism and environmentalism. While some animistic beliefs cultivate ecological responsibility, others have a more nuanced influence. Strengthening specific customs and practices and fostering the attribution of animistic essence to living things could be avenues for promoting environmental stewardship within animistic communities. Further research is needed to explore the factors that influence the animism-environmentalism relationship. Understanding these complexities can help develop strategies for nurturing animistic values and empowering environmental movements.

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

Introduction

The anthropocentric worldview has fueled environmental exploitation and degradation of nature (Muradian & Gómez-Baggethun, 2021; Pearce, 2023) ^[33, 38]. Humanity has been inducing climate change since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. Greenhouse gas emissions and habitat loss are pushing temperatures beyond sustainable levels, disrupting ecosystems and the diversity of life on Earth. These, combined with rampant wildlife exploitation, weaken nature's capacity to support human well-being, food security, and development. As a result, human vulnerability is increasing (Pörtner *et al.*, 2023) ^[40]. Humanity stands at a critical juncture, facing environmental crises of unprecedented scale. Thus, humankind is obligated to confront the harsh consequences of its interactions with the planet (Einhorn, 2020) ^[14]. This necessitates exploring alternative perspectives that can bridge the divide between humans and the natural world, paving the way for a more harmonious and sustainable future (Harvey, 2019; Mekonen, 2020; Ochoa, 2021) ^[19, 31, 36].

Animism stands in stark contrast to the anthropocentric worldview. It attributes life to all things, including non-human entities that are viewed, as articulated by Naidu (2011) ^[34] and Waldrep (2018) ^[52], to even influence human lives and events. In the

face of mounting environmental challenges, animism presents itself as a promising new paradigm (Van Eyghen, 2023; Enstedt & Moberg, 2023; Perdibon, 2019) ^[49, 15, 39]. It challenges the dominant western view of human-nature divide. Within animistic cultures, the natural world is not simply a resource to be exploited. Instead, it is seen as a living system deserving of respect. This inherent reverence, woven into the fabric of customs and practices, has fostered a complex interplay between meeting human needs and ensuring environmental sustainability (Harvey, 2019; Kunchambo *et al.*, 2021; Mumcu & Yilmaz, 2018) ^[19, 26, 32]. Animistic cultures view objects as imbued with spirits. This extends beyond simple animation, suggesting these inanimate things possess sentience or the ability to think and feel, similar to humans. They are further seen as having distinct personalities and even the capacity for independent action. Animism essentially grants objects agency, blurring the lines between the living and the non-living. This attribution of animistic essence fosters a profound respect and connection with the broader environment. Practices like offering thanks before taking something from nature or treating cherished objects with reverence exemplify this connection (Latayan & Latayan, 2024) ^[27]. While not universally embraced, animism presents a unique worldview where everything, in some way, holds a spark of life.

However, while the belief in the animation of objects unites animistic societies globally, it is crucial to recognize animism's complexity. As Harvey (2019) ^[19], Park (2021) ^[37], Pearce (2023) ^[38], and Swancutt (2019) ^[48] aptly point out, it's not a single, codified belief system. Rather, it's a multifaceted cultural phenomenon woven from diverse threads of beliefs and practices, embodying unique expressions within each societal context.

Animistic beliefs often motivate individuals to appease, avoid, or influence the perceived spiritual forces around them, driven by a sense of fear (Clemons, 2014) ^[10]. This fear stems from intuitive concepts about the mind-body duality and the animation of objects within the animistic worldview (Coelho *et al.*, 2021) ^[9]. Consequently, even seemingly unstoppable forces like capitalist development can become intertwined with animistic rituals. Practices like appeasing local spirits before land development or employing spiritual guides for miners venturing into dangerous conditions exemplify this connection. However, such rituals are not without their challenges. Some scholars, like Kleinod-Freudenberg *et al.* (2022) ^[23], highlight a growing trend of these practices becoming commercialized and commodified.

Long before colonialism in the Philippines, animism flourished. This ancient belief system imbued the natural world with a vibrant tapestry of spirits called *anitos*. These spirits were believed to reside in everything from trees and rocks to rivers, and even extended to the unseen realm of dreams and omens (Acac, 2020; Cervantes, 2023; Esilit, 2023; Vicerra & Javier, 2013) ^[1, 7, 16, 51].

Across generations, Filipinos have perpetuated animistic beliefs, manifesting them in a diverse array of practices. This enduring tradition continues to exert a powerful influence on Philippine society, evident in the multifaceted expressions of rituals and customs. From commonplace offerings accompanied by whispered prayers to the reverence accorded to natural sanctuaries and ancestral rites, animism permeates the lives of many Filipinos. It serves as a persistent reminder of the interconnectedness of all

existence (Cabas, 2017; Del Castillo *et al.*, 2023; Nelmidia-Flores, 2021; & Quilo *et al.*, 2015) ^[4, 13, 35, 43].

Despite the overlay of Christianity and other belief systems, the continued practice of rituals and offerings reflects a deeply ingrained worldview that perceives the visible and invisible realms as interconnected (Casiño, 2013; Macaranas, 2021) ^[5, 30]. Filipino animistic customs and practices encompass a range of interactions with the spirit world. Common practices include uttering *tabi-tabi po, nuno* (excuse me, old man) to appease spirits in nature, seeking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings, and consulting *albalyos* (folk healers) believed to possess spiritual knowledge. Additionally, Filipinos may pray to or revere statues and images, or interpret the appearance of moths or butterflies as signs from deceased loved ones (Latayan & Latayan, 2024) ^[27]. Less frequent animistic customs and practices may involve using religious paraphernalia like holy cards and medallions for protection, praying to and appeasing nature spirits for bountiful harvests or catches, venerating mountain deities like Mariang Makiling, and utilizing amulets (Latayan *et al.*, 2024) ^[28]. These customs and practices highlight the animistic belief in the interconnectedness of the spiritual and natural worlds, where humans seek the favor and respect of powerful spirits. Recent discussions increasingly recognize the potential value of animistic perspectives in strengthening environmentalism. Scholars highlight the alignment between core animistic values and prominent environmental principles of today. These include reverence for nature, a holistic understanding of the world, and the interconnectedness of all things (Allison, 2019; & Cassar, 2023) ^[2, 6]. Animism's emphasis on the spiritual and relational aspects of the natural world offers a valuable counterpoint to the often technocratic and functionalist approaches that dominate western environmentalism (Pierce, 2021; Quijada, 2022 ^[42]; Selby, 2017 ^[45]; & Sponsel, 2014 ^[46]).

Environmentalism goes beyond simply caring about the environment. It is a multifaceted concept encompassing both pro-environmental attitudes and a willingness to take action to protect the natural world (Armstrong, 2019; Davis, 2020; Funk and Kennedy, 2016) ^[3, 12, 17]. At its core lies a deep sense of responsibility for the well-being of the planet. This responsibility stems from an understanding of the interconnectedness within ecosystems and how human activities can disrupt this delicate balance (Cruz and Manata, 2020; Gnansounou and Pandey, 2017; Weyler, 2018) ^[11, 18, 53].

Environmentalists prioritize the health of the planet, recognizing the web of life that sustains all ecosystems. Their concern extends beyond personal needs and wants, fostering a holistic perspective that values biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, and the overall protection of nature's complex wonders.

Environmentalism is more than just caring about the planet. It is a call to action, demanding active and tangible efforts to address the complex challenges facing our world (Kumar *et al.*, 2021; Leicht *et al.*, 2018; Prastio *et al.*, 2023) ^[25, 29, 41]. This action takes many forms, from individual steps like reducing your carbon footprint and managing waste responsibly to collective efforts like advocating for strong environmental policies, participating in conservation projects, and promoting sustainable practices. Environmental activism bridges the gap between concern

and meaningful change, empowering individuals and communities to tackle pressing issues like deforestation, pollution, and habitat loss (Chu & Karr, 2016; Iqbal, Ahmad, & Halim, 2020; Kiper, 2013; Strand *et al.*, 2020)^[18, 21, 22, 47]. As concern translates into action, environmentalism becomes a powerful force driving positive transformations in how societies interact with and protect the natural world. Conservation efforts are becoming more holistic and inclusive by incorporating cultural values into environmental management strategies. This shift acknowledges the inherent interconnectedness of nature, culture, and spirituality. By taking a balanced and culturally sensitive approach, conservation initiatives can be strengthened for long-term success (Verschuuren *et al.*, 2021)^[50].

This research suggests that animism presents a comprehensive and ethical framework for comprehending and tackling environmental challenges. Animistic beliefs endow all things with spirit, sentience, and even personhood, fostering a deep sense of connection and responsibility towards the natural world, interwoven with the interconnectedness of the cosmos (Honegger, 2015; Kopnina, 2019; Sadowski, 2020; Zhu *et al.*, 2022)^[20, 24, 44, 54]. This profound respect motivates animistic communities to coexist harmoniously with their environment, adopting sustainable practices that ensure ecological balance.

The researchers posit that integrating animistic perspectives can revitalize and deepen contemporary environmentalism. By embracing animistic values and insights, environmentalism has the potential to move beyond its anthropocentric focus and cultivate a more holistic and reverent relationship with nature that may lead to the development of more effective and sustainable environmental policies and practices. This work serves as a testament to the significant role animism can play in navigating environmental challenges. By illuminating 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 materials, natural places, forces of nature, manmade materials, manmade places, and words; 3. the level of environmentalism of respondents in terms of concern for the environment, action to protect 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 adopted a quantitative approach, specifically using a combination of descriptive and correlational methods. The descriptive method aimed to assess the prevalence of animistic customs and practices, the degree to which animistic essence is attributed to objects, and the level of environmentalism.

The correlational method was then employed to investigate the strength and direction of the relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism and between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism.

A sample of 136 adult residents from Purok 1, Barangay Dumagmang, Labo, Camarines Norte, Philippines, participated in this study. These respondents were drawn from a population of 208 adult individuals residing in the upland rural community. The study employed simple random sampling, ensuring that all members of the target population had an equal chance to be selected. Data collection involved individual survey interviews using a self-developed questionnaire.

The self-developed questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first section focused on identifying and evaluating animistic customs and practices. The second section assessed the degree to which animistic essence is attributed to various elements such as animals, plants, non-living natural materials, natural places, forces of nature, manmade materials, manmade places, and words. Finally, the third section evaluated environmentalism through three aspects: Concern for the environment, action to protect nature, and overall environmentalism.

To analyze data on animistic customs and practices, researchers employed descriptive statistics like frequency distributions, percentage counts, and rankings. This approach provided insights into how prevalent these cultural elements were among the participants. For the sections on attributing animistic essence and environmentalism, the study utilized mean scores from a five-point Likert scale. The levels of the variables were determined using the scale: 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).

Researchers delved into the connection between animistic beliefs and practices and environmentalism using point-biserial correlation. To explore the link between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism, the study employed Pearson correlation coefficient analysis. These statistical techniques provided insights into the strength and direction of the relationship. The strength of the correlation was categorized using a standard scale: 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

In relation to the research objectives, the statistical treatment of data, yielded the following results:

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

Rank No	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
1	Consulting and getting treatment from an <i>albularyo</i> or folk healer	109	80.15
2	Uttering <i>tabi-tabi po, nuno</i>	107	78.68
3	Asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment	83	61.03
4	Refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits	82	60.29
5	Pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or <i>aswangs</i> (supernatural monsters)	79	58.09

Table 1 shows the animistic customs and practices from rank 1 to rank 5 with their corresponding frequencies and percentage counts of responses. Of all the animistic customs and practices of the respondents, “consulting and getting treatment from an *albularyo* or folk healer” was ranked number one due to the highest frequency of responses at 109 which was 80.15% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 2 was “uttering *tabi-tabi po, nuno*” with a frequency

of 107 (78.68%). Ranked 3 was “asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment” with a frequency of 83 (61.03%). Ranked 4 was “refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits” with a frequency of 82 (60.29%). Ranked 5 was “pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or *aswangs*” with a frequency of 79 (58.09%).

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

Rank No.	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
6	Refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits	76	55.88
7	Considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one	75	55.15
8	Offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings	74	54.41
9	Refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits	73	53.68
10	Turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits	58	42.65

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 pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits” was ranked number 6 with a frequency of 76 which was 55.88% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 7 was “considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a

departed loved one” with a frequency of 75 (55.15%). Ranked 8 was “offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings” with a frequency of 74 (54.41%). Having a frequency of 73 (53.68%), “refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits” was ranked 9. Ranked 10 was “turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits” with a frequency of 58 (42.65%).

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

Rank No.	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
11	Burning incense to drive away evil spirits	49	36.03
12	Worshipping statues or images	48	35.29
13	Communicating or interacting with the dead	38	27.94
14	Carrying some grains of salt or placing them on the roof or window sill to ward off <i>aswangs</i> .	32	23.53
15	Using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits	28	20.59

Table 3 shows the animistic customs and practices from rank 11 to rank 15 with the corresponding frequencies and percentage counts of responses. “Burning incense to drive away evil spirits” had a frequency of 49 which was 36.03% of the total number of respondents and was ranked number 11 among the animistic customs and practices. Ranked 12 was “worshipping statues or images” with a frequency of 48 (35.29%). Ranked 13 was “communicating or interacting

with the dead” with a frequency of 38 (27.94%). Having a frequency of 32 (23.53%) “carrying some amount of salt or placing salt on the roof or window pane to ward off *aswangs*” was ranked 14. Ranked 15 was “using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits” with a frequency of 28 (20.59%).

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

Rank No.	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
16	Asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch	21	15.44
17	Using amulets	19	13.97
18	Praying to nature spirits	18	13.24
19	Blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them	17	12.50
20	Observing mourning customs such as prohibitions on sweeping the floor, wearing bright colored clothes, going straight home after visiting the dead, etc.	16	11.76

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, “asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch” was ranked number 16 with a frequency of 21 or 15.44% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 17 was “using amulets” with a frequency of 19 (13.97%). Ranked 18 was “praying to nature spirits” with a frequency of 18 (13.94%). Having a frequency of 17 (12.50%), “blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them” was ranked 19. Due to the frequency of 16 (11.76%), “observing mourning customs such as prohibitions on sweeping the floor, wearing bright colored clothes, going straight home after visiting the dead, etc.” came out with a rank of 20 among the animistic customs and practices.

Table 5: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 21-23)

Rank No.	Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
21	Avoiding getting near a termite hill or a balete tree	14	10.29
22	Performing rituals to deflect evil eye or curses	12	8.82
23	Placing a broomstick beside the house entrance when a household member is pregnant to ward off <i>aswangs</i>	9	6.62

Table 5 shows the animistic customs and practices from rank 21 to rank 23 with their corresponding frequencies and percentages of responses. Among the animistic customs and practices of the respondents, “avoiding getting near a termite hill or a balete tree” was ranked number 21 with a frequency of 14 or 10.29% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 22 was “performing rituals to deflect evil eye or curses” with a frequency of 12 (8.82%). Ranked 23 was “placing a broomstick beside the house entrance when a household member is pregnant to ward off *aswangs*” with a frequency of 9 (6.62%).

Table 6: Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects

Objects	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Animals	3.39	Moderate
Plants	3.13	Moderate
Non-Living Natural Objects	2.93	Moderate
Natural Places	2.91	Moderate
Forces of Nature	3.00	Moderate
Manmade Materials	2.92	Moderate
Manmade Places	3.03	Moderate
Words	2.96	Moderate

Table 6 shows the attribution of animistic essence to objects with their respective means and verbal interpretations. Attribution of animistic essence to animals, plants, non-living natural materials, natural places, forces of nature, manmade materials, manmade places, and words, respectively had the following means: 3.39, 3.13, 2.93, 2.91,

3.00, 2.92, 3.03, and 2.96, all of which were interpreted as moderate.

Table 7: Levels of Environmentalism

Environmentalism	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Concern for the environment	3.51	High
Action to protect nature	3.53	High
Overall	3.52	High

Table 7 shows the levels of environmentalism among respondents. Environmentalism in terms of concern for the environment, action to protect nature, and the overall exhibited the means 3.51, 3.53, and 3.52 which were all interpreted as high, respectively.

Table 8: Significant Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 1-5) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern for the environment	Action to protect nature	Overall
1. Consulting and getting treatment from an <i>albularyo</i> or folk healer	0.133 Very weak	0.083 Very weak	0.127 Very weak
2. Uttering <i>tabi-tabi po, nuno</i>	.20* Weak	.681** Strong	.516** Moderate
3. Asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment	0.15 Very weak	.181* Very weak	.194* Very weak
4. Refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits	0.056 Very weak	0.085 Very weak	0.082 Very weak
5. Pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or <i>aswangs</i> (supernatural monsters)	-0.049 Very weak	0.004 Very weak	-0.026 Very weak
** Highly significant if p-value ≤ .01 * Significant if p-value ≤ .05			

Table 8 presents the significant relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 1-5) and environmentalism. “Uttering *tabi-tabi po, nuno*” was significantly related to environmentalism, specifically, in terms of concern for the environment, with a weak correlation of .20. Highly significant relationships were found between the same custom and environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature and the overall with a strong correlation of .681 and a moderate correlation of .516, respectively. “Asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment” was significantly related to environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature and the overall with very weak correlations of .181 and .194, respectively. No significant relationship was found between the customs and practices “consulting and getting treatment from an *albularyo* or folk healer”, “refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits”, and “pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or *aswangs* (supernatural monsters)” and environmentalism.

Table 9: Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 6-10) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern for the environment	Action to protect nature	Overall
6. Refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits	.243** Weak	0.116 Very weak	.211* Weak
7. Considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one	0.007 Very weak	.259** Weak	0.156 Very weak
8. Offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings	0.092 Very weak	0.143 Very weak	0.138 Very weak
9. Refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits	0.007 Very weak	-0.044 Very weak	-0.022 Very weak
10. Turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits	0.134 Very weak	0.016 Very weak	0.088 Very weak
**Highly significant if p-value ≤ .01 * Significant if p-value ≤ .05			

Table 9 presents the relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 6-10) and environmentalism. Highly significant relationship was found between the custom “refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits” and environmentalism in terms of concern for the environment with a weak correlation of 2.43. The same custom was also found to be significantly related to environmentalism in terms of the overall with a weak correlation of .211. Highly significant relationship was found between “considering a moth or a

butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one” and environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature with a weak correlation of .259. No significant relationship was found between the customs and practices “offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings”, “refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits”, and “turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits” and environmentalism.

Table 10: Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 11-15) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern for the environment	Action to protect nature	Overall
11. Burning incense to drive away evil spirits	0.006 Very weak	0.022 Very weak	0.017 Very weak
12. Worshipping statues or images	0.138 Very weak	0.03 Very weak	0.099 Very weak
13. Communicating or interacting with the dead	-0.038 Very weak	-0.001 Very weak	-0.023 Very weak
14. Carrying some grains of salt or placing them on the roof or the window sill to ward off <i>aswangs</i> .	0.146 Very weak	.200* Weak	.203* Weak
15. Using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits	-0.038 Very weak	-0.001 Very weak	-0.023 Very weak
* Significant if p-value ≤ .05			

Table 10 presents the relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 11-15) and environmentalism. Significant relationships were found between the custom and practice of “carrying some grains of salt or placing them on the roof or the window sill to ward off *aswangs*” and environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature and the overall with weak correlations of .200 and .203,

respectively. No significant relationship was found between the customs and practices “burning incense to drive away evil spirits”, “worshipping statues or images”, “communicating or interacting with the dead”, and “using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits” and environmentalism.

Table 11: Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 16-20) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern for the environment	Action to protect nature	Overall
16. Asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch	-0.02 Very weak	0.112 Very weak	0.054 Very weak
17. Using amulets	0.014 Very weak	-0.003 Very weak	0.007 Very weak
18. Praying to nature spirits	-0.012 Very weak	-0.001 Very weak	-0.007 Very weak
19. Blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them	-0.052 Very weak	0.063 Very weak	0.007 Very weak
20. Observing mourning customs such as prohibitions on sweeping the floor, wearing bright colored clothes, going straight home after visiting the dead, etc.	-0.067 Very weak	0.055 Very weak	-0.007 Very weak

Table 11 shows the relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 16-20) and environmentalism. The customs and practices “asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch”, “using amulets”, “praying to nature spirits”, “blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid

hitting them”, and “observing mourning customs such as prohibitions on sweeping the floor, wearing bright colored clothes, going straight home after visiting the dead, etc.” were not found to be significantly related to environmentalism.

Table 12: Relationships between Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 21-23) and Environmentalism

Animism Custom and Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern for the environment	Action to protect nature	Overall
21. Avoiding getting near a termite hill or a balete tree	0.108 Very weak	0.143 Very weak	0.147 Very weak
22. Performing rituals to deflect evil eye or curses	0.121 Very weak	0.062 Very weak	0.107 Very weak
23. Placing a broomstick beside the house entrance when a household member is pregnant to ward off <i>aswangs</i>	-0.025 Very weak	-0.037 Very weak	-0.036 Very weak

Table 12 shows the relationships between animistic customs and practices (ranks 21-23) and environmentalism. The customs and practices “avoiding getting near termite a hill or a balete tree”, “performing rituals to deflect evil eye and

curses”, and “placing a broomstick beside the house entrance when a household member is pregnant to ward off *aswangs*” were not found to be significantly related to environmentalism.

Table 13: Significant Relationships between the Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects and Environmentalism

Animism Objects	Environmentalism		
	Concern for the environment	Action to protect nature	Overall
Animals	.399** Moderate	0.131 Very weak	.311** Weak
Plants	.256** Weak	0.107 Very weak	.213* Weak
Non-living Natural Materials	0.002 Very weak	0.05 Very weak	0.031 Very weak
Natural Places	0.024 Very weak	0.041 Very weak	0.038 Very weak
Forces of Nature	-0.04 Very weak	0.009 Very weak	-0.018 Very weak
Manmade Materials	-0.058 Very weak	-0.032 Very weak	-0.053 Very weak
Manmade Places	-0.002 Very weak	-0.065 Very weak	-0.039 Very weak
Words	0.089 Very weak	.170* Very weak	0.152 Very weak
** Highly significant if p-value ≤ .01 * Significant if p-value ≤ .05			

Table 13 shows significant relationships between the attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism. Relationships between attribution of animistic essence to animals and environmentalism in terms of concern for the environment and the overall were highly significant with a moderate correlation of .399 and a weak correlation of .311, respectively. Relationship between attribution of animistic essence to plants and environmentalism in terms of concern for the environment was highly significant with a weak correlation of .256. Relationship between attribution to the same object and environmentalism in terms of the overall was significant with a weak correlation of .213. Relationship between attribution to words and environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature was significant with a weak correlation of .170. Attribution to natural places, forces of nature, manmade materials, and manmade places were not significantly related to environmentalism.

Discussions

In connection with 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: “consulting and getting treatment from an *albularyo* or folk healer”, “uttering *tabi-tabi po, nuno*”, “asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment”, “refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits”, “pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or *aswangs*”, “refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits”, “considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one”, “offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings”, “refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits”, “turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade

mischievous spirits”, “burning incense to drive away evil spirits”, “worshipping statues or images”, “communicating or interacting with the dead”, “carrying some grains of salt or placing them on the roof or the window sill to ward off *aswangs*”, “using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits”, “asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch”, “using amulets”, “praying to nature spirits”, “blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them”, “observing mourning customs such as prohibitions on sweeping the floor, wearing bright colored clothes, going straight home after visiting the dead, etc..”, “avoiding getting near a termite hill or a balete tree”, “performing rituals to deflect evil eye and curses”, and “placing a broomstick beside the house entrance when a household member is pregnant to ward off *aswangs*”.

Most of the customs and practices mentioned in this research were also found by Latayan & Latayan (2024)^[27] in an upland rural community in the municipality of Los Baños in the province of Laguna, and by Latayan, *et al.* (2024)^[28] in a riverside informal settler community in the city of Calamba in the same province. Customs and practices mentioned by Acac (2020)^[1], Cabas (2017)^[4], Cervantes (2013), Eslit (2023)^[16], Casiño (2013)^[5], Del Castillo *et al.* (2023)^[13], Macaranas (2021)^[30], Nelmidia-Flores (2021)^[35], Vicerra & Javier (2013)^[51], and Quilo *et al.* (2015)^[43] were also similar to some of those mentioned in this research. Noteworthy was the absence of the custom and practice of worshipping Mariang Makiling, a goddess-like mountain spirit. This dissimilarity must have been due to the research locale falling outside the cultural region of the subject communities of Latayan and Latayan (2024)^[27] and Latayan, *et al.* (2024)^[28].

In connection with 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 materials, natural places, forces of nature, manmade materials, manmade places, and words were moderate.

Building upon the work of Naidu (2011)^[34], Park (2021)^[37], Pearce (2023)^[38], Swancutt (2019)^[48], and Waldrep (2018)^[52], who conceptualize animism as a belief system attributing spirit, sentience, and personhood to non-human entities, this research found similar attribution to certain categories of objects. It revealed moderate levels of attribution across all object categories, exhibiting a close resemblance to Latayan and Latayan (2024)^[27] but diverged from Latayan *et al.* (2024)^[28], who reported higher levels of attribution to natural objects.

Given the shared upland rural setting between the present study and Latayan and Latayan (2024)^[27], compared to the informal settler riverside community in an industrialized area studied by Latayan, *et al.* (2024)^[28], it is plausible that the availability and the demand for natural resources influenced the participants' responses. Informal settlers, mostly originating from rural areas, may have an increased tendency to ascribe animistic qualities to natural resources, potentially due to limited access to-- and a consequent heightened wanting for-- these kinds of materials.

In connection with the research objective of determining the level of environmentalism in terms of concern for the environment, action to protect nature, and the overall, the

analysis revealed high levels of environmentalism in the three dimensions.

These findings resonate the work of Allison (2019)^[2], Cassar (2023)^[6], Selby (2017)^[45], Sponsel (2014)^[46], and Quijada (2022)^[42], who explore the connection between animistic belief systems and living in harmony with nature. The observed high levels of environmentalism across dimensions also align broadly with the research of Latayan & Latayan (2024)^[27] and Latayan *et al.* (2024)^[28] that found remarkable levels of environmentalism in their respective communities.

In connection with the research objective of determining any significant relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism, the following results were found: “uttering *tabi-tabi po, nuno*” was significantly related to environmentalism in terms of concern for the environment with a weak positive correlation; highly significant relationships were found between the same custom and environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature and the overall with strong and moderate positive correlations; “asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment” was significantly related to environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature and the overall with very weak positive correlations; highly significant relationship was found between “refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits” and environmentalism in terms of concern for the environment with a weak positive correlation; the same custom was also found to be significantly related to environmentalism in terms of the overall with a weak positive correlation; highly significant relationship was found between “considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one” and environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature with a weak positive correlation; significant relationships were found between “carrying some grains of salt or placing them on the roof or the window sill to ward off *aswangs*” and environmentalism in terms of action to protect nature and the overall with weak positive correlations; 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.

This study aligns with prior research (Allison, 2019; Enstedt & Moberg, 2023; Cassar 2023; Honegger, 2015; Mumcu & Yilmaz, 2018; Perdibon, 2019; Quijada, 2022; Sadowski, 2020; Selby, 2017; Sponsel, 2014; Van Eyghen, 2023; and Zhu *et al.*, 2022)^[2, 15, 6, 20, 32, 39, 42, 44, 45, 46, 49, 54] by demonstrating significant relationships and positive correlations between specific animistic customs and environmentalism. These findings support the established notion that animist communities revere nature and strive for balance between human activity and ecological abundance (Harvey, 2019; Kopnina, 2019)^[19, 24].

While positive correlations exist between some animistic customs and practices and environmentalism, the majority of these cultural elements did not exhibit any statistically significant correlation with environmentalism. Such findings align with previous research by Latayan & Latayan (2024)^[27] and Latayan *et al.* (2024)^[28] suggesting that the environmental impact of animistic belief systems may be more nuanced, with some customs potentially promoting,

and others having a neutral or even negative, effect on environmental stewardship.

Furthermore, while some observed correlations between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism were statistically significant, the strength of these correlations was generally weak. This pattern aligns with existing research on the erosion of animistic traditions due to factors like commercialization, the influence of dominant religions, and the growing prevalence of secular values (Acac, 2020^[1]; Casiño, 2013^[5]; Del Castillo *et al.*, 2023^[13]; Kleinod-Freudenberg *et al.*, 2022^[23]; Macaranas, 2021^[30]; Pierce, 2021; Quijada, 2022^[42]; Selby, 2017^[45]; Sponsel, 2014^[46]; Vicerra & Javier, 2013^[51]). These external forces may weaken the connection between the animistic customs and practices and environmentalism. Moreover, the partially upheld hypothesis reveals a multifaceted relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism. While not all of the customs and practices were significantly linked to environmentalism, the existence of statistically significant relationships between some variables suggests that the adherence to certain customs and practices can promote environmentalism.

In connection with the research objective of determining relationship between the attribution of animistic essence to various objects and environmentalism, it was found that the attribution of animistic essence to animals displayed a highly significant relationship with concern for the environment (moderate positive correlation) and a weaker, but still significant, positive correlation with overall environmentalism. Similarly, attributing animistic essence to plants demonstrated a highly significant, yet weak, positive correlation with concern for the environment, and a significant, but also weak, positive correlation with overall environmentalism. Additionally, a significant, though weak, positive correlation emerged between attributing animistic essence to words and action to protect nature. The attribution of animistic essence to other object categories did not yield any significant relationships with environmentalism. Consequently, the initial hypothesis proposing no significant relationship between animistic attribution and environmentalism received only partial support.

The observed significant relationships between attributing animistic essence to animals, plants, and words and environmentalism align with the perspectives of Naidu (2011)^[34], Park (2021)^[37], Pearce (2023)^[38], Swancutt (2019)^[48], and Waldrep (2018)^[52]. These scholars posit animism as a worldview that imbues non-human entities with spirit, personhood, and sentience, potentially influencing human behavior and environmental engagement. Conversely, the lack of significant relationships between attributing animistic essence to other objects and environmentalism resonates with the findings of Latayan & Latayan (2024)^[27] and Latayan, *et al.* (2024)^[28]. Collectively, these results suggest that not all aspects of animism promote environmentalism.

In congruence with the findings on animistic customs and practices, the findings on attribution generally show weak correlations with environmentalism. The external influences may be serving as factors influencing the relationship between customs and practices and environmentalism may also be the factors influencing the relationship between attribution and environmentalism.

This study's partial confirmation of the hypothesis linking the attribution of animistic essence to some objects with concern for the environment, action to protect nature, and overall environmentalism highlights the intricate nature of the animism-environmentalism relationship. While certain animistic beliefs demonstrably cultivate ecological awareness and pro-environmental behavior, others exert a more nuanced influence on environmental practices. However, the research reveals a positive relationship between attributing animistic essence to specific objects, especially living entities, and heightened environmentalism. This finding aligns with prior scholarship by Harvey (2019)^[19], Mekonen (2020)^[31], Mumcu & Yilmaz (2018)^[32], Ochoa (2021)^[36], Pearce (2023)^[38], and Kunchambo *et al.* (2021)^[26], which underscores the significant role animism plays in fostering a more respectful and responsible relationship between humans and the natural world.

Drawing on the research findings, this study proposes strengthening of specific animistic customs and practices within the upland rural community in the municipality of Labo. This targeted approach could serve to further enhance environmental stewardship among residents. Examples of such customs include invoking *tabi-tabi po, nuno*, asking permission or forgiveness from unseen environmental entities, and refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits. Additionally, fostering the attribution of animistic essence to animals and plants may serve as another avenue for promoting pro-environmental behavior.

To facilitate these efforts, the establishment of a culture-based environmentalist values enhancement program by a concerned agency or organization is recommended. Such a program could be designed to not only strengthen the community's cultural identity but also contribute significantly to the conservation and preservation of the natural environment.

The link between animism and environmentalism deserves deeper exploration. Researchers can delve into the factors that strengthen or weaken this connection. An understanding of these complexities allows for further development of strategies to nurture animistic values and empower environmental movements.

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