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Animistic Customs and Practices, Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects, and Environmentalism in an Upland Rural Community in Dolores, Quezon, Philippines

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between animistic beliefs and environmentalism in an upland rural barangay in Dolores, Quezon, Philippines. Using a quantitative design with descriptive and correlational methods, the research examined 265 adult residents selected through random sampling. The study explored four key areas: (1) the demographic profile of respondents; (2) the prevalence of animistic customs and practices; (3) the attribution of animistic essence to objects; and (4) levels of environmentalism. Statistical analyses, including Spearman and point-biserial correlations, assessed relationships among these variables. Results revealed that demographic factors—particularly age and education—significantly influence

environmental behavior. Moreover, while certain animistic practices were negatively correlated with environmentalism, the attribution of essence to natural elements (specifically animals and plants) showed strong positive correlations with environmental concern and action. These findings suggest a nuanced dynamic: while some traditional beliefs may not directly support conservation, animistic worldviews that emphasize the sentience and personhood of nature can foster environmental responsibility. The study underscores the potential for culturally grounded advocacy and the importance of integrating indigenous perspectives into sustainability efforts. Consequently, all three null hypotheses were rejected.

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

Introduction

Humanity stands at a critical juncture, grappling with unprecedented environmental crises. Since the Industrial Revolution, human activities have significantly contributed to climate change, driven by an anthropocentric worldview that prioritizes human needs over ecological balance (Muradian & Gómez-Baggethun, 2021; Pearce, 2023) [38, 43]. This perspective has led to widespread environmental degradation, including habitat loss and rising greenhouse gas emissions, threatening biodiversity and the stability of ecosystems (Pörtner *et al.*, 2023) [45]. In response, there is a growing call to reconsider humanity's relationship with the natural world, advocating for more inclusive and sustainable perspectives (Einhorn, 2020; Harvey, 2019; Mekonen, 2020; Ochoa, 2021) [16, 21, 36, 41].

Environmentalism

Environmentalism encompasses more than concern for the planet; it involves an active commitment to preserving the natural world. Central to this outlook is an understanding of ecological interdependence and how human actions can disrupt the intricate balance of nature (Cruz & Manata, 2020; Gnansounou & Pandey, 2017; Weyler, 2018) [13, 20, 60]. This sense of duty to safeguard the environment is reflected not only in personal values but also in the willingness to take meaningful steps toward sustainability (Armstrong, 2019 [4]; Davis, 2020; Funk & Kennedy, 2016 [19]).

Environmental advocates place the well-being of the Earth at the forefront, acknowledging the intricate network of life that supports all ecosystems. Their commitment goes beyond individual interests, embracing a broad, interconnected view that emphasizes the preservation of biodiversity, the reduction of climate impacts, and the safeguarding of the planet's natural complexity (Latayan *et al.*, 2024) ^[31].

Environmentalism serves as a powerful force for positive transformation, reshaping how societies engage with and safeguard the natural world. It goes beyond simply expressing concern for the planet—it is a proactive call that urges both individuals and communities to confront urgent environmental challenges head-on (Kumar *et al.*, 2021; Leicht *et al.*, 2018; Prastio *et al.*, 2023) ^[28, 32, 46].

Whether it's participating in reforestation efforts, supporting sustainable initiatives, or campaigning for stronger environmental laws, this movement demands more than awareness—it demands action. Tangible steps, such as minimizing carbon emissions and practicing responsible waste management, reflect the personal dimension of environmental responsibility. On a larger scale, activism provides the structure for coordinated responses to issues like deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss (Chu & Karr, 2016; Iqbal, Ahmad, & Halim, 2020; Kiper, 2013; Strand *et al.*, 2020) ^[10, 24, 25, 54].

By transforming concern into commitment, environmentalism empowers change at every level—bridging the gap between awareness and impact.

Animistic Customs and Practices

In contrast to the anthropocentric perspective, animism offers a radically different way of understanding the world—one in which all entities, human and non-human alike, are seen as alive and capable of agency. As Naidu (2011) ^[39] and Waldrep (2018) ^[59] explain, these non-human beings are often believed to have the power to influence human experiences and events. Rather than viewing nature as a passive resource, animistic traditions regard the natural world as a vibrant, sentient network worthy of reverence.

This deep respect for nature is not abstract—it is embedded in rituals, cultural practices, and everyday interactions, shaping how communities engage with their environment (Harvey, 2019; Kunchambo *et al.*, 2021; Mumcu & Yilmaz, 2018) ^[21, 29, 37]. By challenging the Western dichotomy that separates humanity from nature, animism opens space for alternative frameworks of coexistence. In the context of today's accelerating environmental crises, this worldview emerges as a compelling and timely paradigm (Van Eyghen, 2023; Enstedt & Moberg, 2023; Perdibon, 2019) ^[56, 17, 44], offering insights into more balanced, sustainable ways of living.

Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects

In animistic traditions, the line between living and non-living is not rigid. Objects in the environment are often regarded as possessing spirit, sentience, and personhood—not merely as animated, but as beings capable of thought, emotion, and independent action. These entities are seen as having inner life: spirit refers to the vital force or sacred presence within; sentience implies the capacity for awareness or feeling; and personhood confers individuality, moral agency, and relational identity. As such, these items are frequently understood to have unique personalities,

which shapes how people relate to them—not just functionally, but ethically and emotionally. By granting such agency to non-human entities, animism challenges conventional distinctions between subjects and objects and fosters a sense of deep kinship with the natural world (Resløkken, 2016; Hornborg, 2016) ^[23].

This worldview nurtures practices rooted in gratitude and reverence—such as expressing thanks before harvesting resources or treating personal belongings with care and respect (Latayan & Latayan, 2024) ^[30]. While not a universally held belief system, animism offers an alternative lens through which the environment is experienced—as alive, interconnected, and deserving of moral consideration. It proposes that every element of the world carries a spark of life, encouraging more mindful and harmonious relationships with all forms of existence.

Relationship Between Demographic Profile and Environmentalism

As global environmental crises intensify, it becomes increasingly important to understand the factors that motivate individuals to embrace pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. Although policy measures and technological advancements have received substantial attention, demographic variables—such as age, gender, and education—remain significant yet frequently underexplored influences, particularly within the context of developing countries (Qadiri *et al.*, 2025).

Recent research reveals notable generational differences in environmental behavior. A study on European Union residents found that older generations, specifically Baby Boomers and Generation X, demonstrate higher levels of pro-environmental behavior than younger cohorts like Millennials and Generation Z. The study suggests that increased internet usage among youth may correlate with lower environmental engagement, pointing to shifts in values and habits influenced by digital culture (Cantillo *et al.*, 2025) ^[6].

Gender has also emerged as a meaningful predictor of environmental behavior. A study from China indicates that women are generally more environmentally concerned than men and are more likely to engage in green practices such as supporting plastic bans and bringing reusable shopping bags. This suggests that gendered socialization and roles may influence how individuals perceive and act on environmental issues (Li *et al.*, 2022) ^[33].

Education level is another critical determinant. Evidence from Croatia highlights a positive relationship between higher educational attainment and stronger environmental attitudes and behaviors, mediated by environmental knowledge acquisition. However, these effects are not uniform across all individuals, indicating the need for nuanced analysis (Mandarić & Hunjet, 2023).

Taken together, these findings illustrate that environmentalism is not a one-size-fits-all ideology but is deeply affected by the demographic characteristics of individuals. This research aims to explore the significant differences between demographic profiles and environmentalism, with a focus on how variables such as age, gender, education, and religion correlate with environmental attitudes and behaviors. By examining these dimensions, the study seeks to contribute to a more targeted and culturally sensitive approach to promoting environmental responsibility.

Relationship Between Animistic Customs and Practices and Environmentalism

Empirical studies have identified positive correlations between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism, suggesting that these traditions may foster ecological concern and action. For instance, in an informal settler riverside community in Calamba City, Laguna, Latayan *et al.* (2024a) observed that practices such as uttering "tabi-tabi po, nuno" (a respectful phrase meaning "excuse me, old man/woman") when traversing areas believed to be inhabited by spirits, seeking permission from nature spirits before engaging in activities like farming or construction, and offering food or performing prayers at specific sites believed to be sacred, were prevalent. These customs reflect a worldview where natural and spiritual realms are interconnected, emphasizing respect and reverence for the environment. The study found significant relationships between some animistic customs and practices and environmentalism, indicating that these traditions may promote concern and action for ecology.

Similarly, in an upland rural community in Labo, Camarines Norte, Philippines, Latayan *et al.* (2024) ^[31] identified prevalent animistic customs and practices, such as the utterance of "tabi-tabi po, nuno" when traversing areas believed to be inhabited by spirits and seeking permission from nature spirits before engaging in activities like farming or construction. The study revealed significant positive correlations 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, possibly due to external factors like commercialization, dominant religion, and secularization, which may weaken the connection between customs and practices and environmentalism.

Relationship Between Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects and Environmentalism

The attribution of animistic essence to objects—viewing them as possessing spirit or life—is another facet of animistic belief that can influence environmental attitudes and behaviors. Studies have found that communities attributing animistic essence to natural objects, such as animals and plants, often exhibit higher levels of environmental concern and pro-environmental behaviors. For example, in the aforementioned study in Calamba City, respondents showed a generally high attribution of animistic essence to natural objects and a moderate attribution to manmade objects. The study found significant relationships between the attribution of animistic essence to some objects and environmentalism, indicating that viewing natural entities as spiritually significant may encourage ecological responsibility.

In contrast, the attribution of animistic essence to manmade objects did not yield significant relationships with environmentalism, suggesting that spiritual beliefs about natural entities may have a more pronounced impact on environmental attitudes and behaviors. This aligns with findings from other studies, such as those conducted in Labo, Camarines Norte, where the attribution of animistic essence to animals and plants displayed a positive relationship with environmentalism, while attribution to most other object categories did not.

These findings underscore the complexity of the relationship between animistic beliefs and environmentalism. While certain aspects of animism, particularly those emphasizing the spiritual significance of natural entities, are correlated with heightened environmental concern and action, other aspects may have a less direct or even negligible impact. This suggests that the specific nature of animistic beliefs and practices, as well as contextual factors such as cultural traditions and external influences, play crucial roles in shaping their relationship with environmentalism.

However, while previous studies have explored the philosophical links between animism and environmental ethics, there remains a lack of empirical research specifically examining how animistic customs, practices, and the attribution of spirit, sentience, and personhood to objects influence environmental attitudes and behaviors in rural Philippine communities. Most existing literature has focused on theoretical or anthropological discussions, leaving a gap in understanding how these beliefs function in contemporary environmental contexts—particularly in areas like Dolores, Quezon, where indigenous worldviews persist alongside modern influences.

Building on previous studies that suggest a connection between animism and environmentalism, this research aimed to empirically examine and clarify the nature of this relationship. Through a quantitative approach, the study sought to generate robust evidence to support the theoretical frameworks that link animistic worldviews with environmental behavior. Specifically, this research intended to determine: 1. the demographic profile of respondents in terms of age, sex, and educational attainment; 2. the animistic customs and practices of the respondents; 3. 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; 4. The level of environmentalism of respondents in terms of concern for the environment, action to protect nature, and overall environmentalism; 5. If there is significant relationship between demographic profile and environmentalism; 6. If there is a significant relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism; and, 7. 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 demographic profile and environmentalism; 2. There is no significant relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism; and 3. 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 employed to investigate the magnitude and direction of the relationship between demographic profile and environmentalism, between animistic customs and practices

and environmentalism, and between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism.

A sample of 265 adult residents from of Barangay Kinabuhayan, Dolores, Quezon, Philippines, participated in this study. These respondents were drawn from a population of 850 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 of selection. Data collection involved individual survey interviews using a self-developed questionnaire.

The self-developed questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section was intended to ascertain the demographic profile of respondents specifically age, sex, and educational attainment. The second section focused on identifying and evaluating animistic customs and practices. The third 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 fourth section evaluated environmentalism through three aspects: concern for the environment, action taken to protect nature, and overall environmentalism.

To analyze the data on demographic profile and animistic customs and practices, the researchers employed descriptive statistics like frequency distributions, percentage counts, and rankings. This approach determined the distribution of respondents according to demographic profile and provided insights into how prevalent animistic customs and practices were among respondents. 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 – 1.83), Low (1.84 – 2.66), Somewhat Low (2.67 – 3.49), Somewhat High (3.50 – 4.32), High (4.33 – 5.15), and Very High (5.16 – 6.00).

Researchers delved into the connection between animistic beliefs and practices and environmentalism using point-biserial correlation. To explore the link between demographic profile and environmentalism and between attributing 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: Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Early Adult	159	60.00
Middle Adult	91	34.30
Late Adult	15	5.70
Total	265	100.00

Table 1 shows the distribution of age groups among the participants. There were 159 individuals categorized as Early Adults, representing 60.00% of the total sample. The Middle Adult group included 91 participants, accounting for

34.30%. The Late Adult group consisted of 15 individuals, making up 5.70% of the total.

Table 2: Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	138	52.08
Male	127	47.92
Total	265	100.00

Table 2 shows the composition of the sample population in terms of sex. Out of the total sample, 138 participants identified as female, accounting for 52.08% of the sample, while 127 participants identified as male, representing 47.92%.

Table 3: Education

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary Graduate	158	59.62
Secondary Level	39	14.72
Elementary Graduate	22	8.30
Tertiary Graduate	18	6.79
Tertiary Level	18	6.79
Elementary Level	10	3.77
Total	265	100.00

Table 3 shows that a total of 158 participants were Secondary Graduates, representing 59.62% of the sample. Secondary Level was reported by 39 participants, accounting for 14.72%. There were 22 participants who were Elementary Graduates, comprising 8.30% of the total. Tertiary Graduates and those at the Tertiary Level each included 18 participants, both making up 6.79% of the sample. Elementary Level was reported by 10 participants, representing 3.77%.

Table 4: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 1-5)

Rank	Animistic Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
1	Consulting and getting treatment from an <i>albulario</i> or folk healer	257	96.98
2	Uttering <i>tabi-tabi po, nuno</i>	252	95.09
3	Refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits	245	92.45
4	Asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment.	236	89.06
5	Considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one	234	88.30

Table 4 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 *albulario* or folk healer” was ranked number one due to the highest frequency of responses at 257 which was 96.98% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 2 was “uttering “*tabi-tabi po, nuno*” (“excuse me, old man”, an invocation to avoid offending spirits in nature)” with a frequency of 252 (95.09%). Ranked 3 was “Refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits” with a frequency of 245 (92.45%). Ranked 4 was “asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment.” with a frequency of 236 (89.06%). Ranked 5 was “considering a moth or a butterfly

that enters the house as a departed loved one” with a frequency of 234 (88.30%).

Table 5: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 6-10)

Rank	Animistic Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
6	Refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits	231	87.17
7	Pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or <i>aswangs</i>	176	66.42
8	Blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them	174	65.66
9	Revering sacred things or places in nature	170	64.15
10	Turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits	162	61.13

Table 5 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 disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits” was ranked number 6 with a frequency of 231 which was 87.17% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 7 was “Pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or *aswangs* (supernatural monsters)” with a frequency of 176 (66.42%). Ranked 8 was “Blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them” with a frequency of 174 (65.66%). Having a frequency of 170 (64.15%), “Revering sacred things or places in nature” was ranked 9. Ranked 10 was “turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits” with a frequency of 162 (61.13%).

Table 6: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 11-15)

Rank	Animistic Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
11	Burning incense to drive away evil spirits	160	60.38
12	Refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits	154	58.11
13	Offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings	153	57.74
14	Revering statues or images	149	56.23
15	Carrying some grains of salt or placing them on the roof or windowsill to ward off <i>aswangs</i>	131	49.43

Table 6 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 160 which was 60.38% of the total number of respondents and was ranked number 11 among the animistic customs and practices. Ranked 12 was “Refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits” with a frequency of 154 (58.11%). Ranked 13 was “Offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings” with a frequency of 153 (57.74%). Having a frequency of 149 (56.23%), “Revering

statues or images” was ranked 14. Ranked 15 was “Carrying some grains of salt or placing them on the roof or windowsill to ward off *aswangs*” with a frequency of 131 (49.43%).

Table 7: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 16-20)

Rank	Animistic Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
16	Revering <i>balete</i> and old trees	127	47.92
17	Asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch	125	47.17
18	Praying to nature spirits	117	44.15
19	Communicating or interacting with the dead	114	43.02
20	Using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits	100	37.74

Table 7 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, “Revering *balete* and old trees” was ranked number 16 with a frequency of 127 or 47.92% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 17 was “Asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch” with a frequency of 125 (47.17%). Ranked 18 was “Praying to nature spirits” with a frequency of 117 (44.15%). Having a frequency of 114 (43.02%), “Communicating or interacting with the dead” was ranked 19. Due to the frequency of 100 (37.74%), “Using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits” came out with a rank of 20 among the animistic customs and practices.

Table 8: Animistic Customs and Practices (Ranks 21-25)

Rank	Animistic Custom and Practice	Frequency	Percentage
21	Worshipping <i>Mariang Makiling</i>	82	30.94
22	Using amulets	66	24.91
23	Recognizing the presence of other worldly creatures such as <i>dwende, kapre, tikbalang, nuno, and aswang</i>	46	17.36
24	Worshipping the mountain	45	16.98
25	Shedding animal blood on foundation or footing trenches of houses or buildings to be constructed	38	14.34

Table 8 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, “Worshipping *Mariang Makiling*” was ranked number 21 with a frequency of 82 or 30.94% of the total number of respondents. Ranked 22 was “Using amulets” with a frequency of 66 (24.91%). Ranked 23 was “Recognizing the presence of other worldly creatures such as *dwende, kapre, tikbalang, nuno, and aswang*” with a frequency of 46 (17.36%). Having a frequency of 45 (16.98%) “Worshipping the mountain” was ranked 24. Ranked 25 was “Shedding animal blood on foundation or footing trenches of houses or buildings to be constructed” with a frequency of 38 (14.34%).

Table 9: Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects

Object	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Animals	4.69	High
Plants	3.79	Somewhat High
Non-living Natural Objects	3.41	Somewhat Low
Places in Nature	3.41	Somewhat Low
Forces of Nature	3.35	Somewhat Low
Overall	3.73	Somewhat High

Table 9 presents the mean scores and verbal interpretations of respondents' attribution of animistic essence to various objects. The object that received the highest mean score is animals, with a rating of 4.69, interpreted as High. Plants follow with a mean score of 3.79, which falls under the Somewhat High category. Both non-living natural objects and places in nature received the same mean score of 3.41, each categorized as Somewhat Low. Forces of nature received the lowest mean score of 3.35, also falling under the Somewhat Low interpretation. The overall mean score for all objects is 3.73, which corresponds to a Somewhat High level of attribution.

Table 10: Environmentalism

Environmentalism	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Concern	4.85	High
Action	5.05	High
Overall	4.95	High

Table 12: Significant Relationships between Animistic Practices and Environmentalism

Practice	Environmentalism		
	Concern	Action	Overall
Consulting and getting treatment from an albularyo or folk healer	-0.012	0.013	0.001
Uttering <i>tabi-tabi po, nuno</i>	0.047	-0.097	-0.032
Considering a moth or a butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one	0.084	.146*	.131*
Using holy cards, religious medallions or similar paraphernalia to protect self and others from sickness and evil spirits	-.222**	-.169**	-.219**
Asking permission or forgiveness from unseen beings in the environment.	0.062	-0.056	0.00
Turning clothes inside out whenever lost in the wilderness to evade mischievous spirits	-.140*	-.207**	-.198**
Refraining from disrespecting food to avoid offending vindictive spirits	-0.01	-0.079	-0.051
Refraining from pointing at things in the wilderness to avoid mishaps or offending spirits	-0.074	0.114	0.027
Refraining from making noise in certain places to avoid offending spirits	0.047	-0.055	-0.007
Blowing of horn whenever driving thru places inhabited by spirits as a sign of respect or to avoid hitting them	0.007	0.081	0.051
Offering food and other things to the dead or unseen beings	-0.005	0.038	0.018
Communicating or interacting with the dead	-.158*	-.128*	-.161**
Communicating or interacting with the dead	-.505**	-.204**	-.391**
Pinning on house walls blessed palm leaves to ward off evil spirits or <i>aswangs</i>	0.057	0.014	0.038
Burning incense to drive away evil spirits	0.023	0.036	0.033
Carrying some grains of salt or placing them on the roof or windowsill to ward off <i>aswangs</i>	-.192**	0.032	-0.085
Asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch	-.172**	-0.095	-.149*
Asking nature spirits to grant bountiful harvest or catch	-.139*	-0.005	-0.078
Revering statues or images	-0.062	-0.099	-0.092
Revering <i>balete</i> and old trees	-.121*	-0.021	-0.078
Revering sacred things or places in nature	0.039	-0.005	0.017
Worshipping <i>Mariang Makiling</i>	-.209**	-.160**	-.207**
Shedding animal blood on foundation or footing trenches of houses or buildings to be constructed	-.371**	-.164**	-.296**
Recognizing the presence of other worldly creatures such as <i>dwende, kapre, tikbalang, nuno, and aswang</i>	-.301**	-.154*	-.252**
Worshipping the mountain	-.310**	-.155*	-.258**

Note. * indicates $p < .05$; ** indicates $p < .01$.

Table 10 shows the mean scores and corresponding verbal interpretations for the levels of environmentalism among respondents. The Concern component has a mean score of 4.85, which is interpreted as High. The Action component has a slightly higher mean score of 5.05, also interpreted as High. The overall mean score for environmentalism is 4.95, which falls under the High category.

Table 11: Significant Relationships between Demographic Profile and Environmentalism

Demographic Profile	Environmentalism		
	Concern	Action	Overall
Age	-.033	-.139*	-.065
Sex	-.032	-.079	-.064
Educational Attainment	.144*	.049	.025

Note. * indicates $p < .05$; ** indicates $p < .01$.

Table 11 presents the significant relationships between demographic profile variables and environmentalism. Age showed a significant but negative and very weak correlation with environmental action ($r = -0.139, p < .05$). Educational attainment showed a significant positive but very weak correlation with environmental concern ($r = 0.144, p < .05$). Sex was not significantly correlated with environmental concern, action, or overall environmentalism.

Table 12 reveals several significant relationships between animistic practices and environmentalism, particularly in terms of concern, action, and overall environmental orientation. One practice, considering a moth or butterfly that enters the house as a departed loved one, exhibited a very weak but significant positive relationship with both environmental action (.146*) and overall environmentalism (.131*), suggesting a minimal correlation with pro-environmental behavior. In contrast, the use of holy cards, religious medallions, or similar paraphernalia to ward off sickness and evil spirits showed a weak negative correlation with environmental concern (-.222**), action (-.169**), and overall environmentalism (-.219**), indicating that this form of spiritual protection may be inversely related to environmentalist attitudes and behaviors.

Turning clothes inside out when lost in the wilderness to evade spirits was also negatively related with environmentalism, with weak but significant correlations across concern (-.140*), action (-.207**), and overall orientation (-.198**). Similarly, communicating or interacting with the dead showed negative correlations in two separate entries. The first had weak negative correlation with concern (-.158*), action (-.128*), and overall (-.161**), while the second showed a more pronounced moderate negative correlation with concern (-.505**), action (-.204**), and overall environmentalism (-.391**).

Carrying salt as protection from malevolent beings correlated weakly and negatively with concern (-.192**) and showed a minimal relationship with overall environmentalism (-.085). Practices involving communication with nature spirits for agricultural or fishing success appeared twice, with the first instance showing weak negative correlations with concern (-.172**) and overall (-.149*), and the second showing a very weak negative correlation with concern (-.139*). Revering balet trees and other old trees was weakly and negatively correlated with concern (-.121*), while worshipping Mariang Makiling also showed weak negative relationships with concern (-.209**), action (-.160**), and overall environmentalism (-.207**).

More strongly, shedding animal blood at construction sites exhibited moderate negative relationships with environmental concern (-.371**), action (-.164**), and overall orientation (-.296**), highlighting a potentially significant inverse relationship between this practice and environmentalist perspectives. Recognizing mythical creatures like dwende, kapre, and tikbalang showed moderate to weak negative correlations with concern (-.301**), action (-.154*), and overall (-.252**). Similarly, worshipping the mountain correlated negatively with concern (-.310**), action (-.155*), and overall environmentalism (-.258**).

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

Attribution of Animistic Essence to Objects	Concern	Action	Overall
Animals	.476**	.601**	.606**
Plants	.164**	.608**	.373**
Non-living Natural Objects	0.057	.350**	.156*
Natural Places	0.119	0.098	.122*
Forces of Nature	0.026	.340**	.150*
Overall	.133*	.453**	.290**

Note. * indicates p < .05; ** indicates p < .01.

Table 13 presents the significant relationships between the attribution of animistic essence to various objects and environmentalism, showing varying degrees of correlation strength across environmental concern, action, and overall orientation. The attribution of animistic essence to animals demonstrated the strongest correlations, with a moderate positive correlation to environmental concern (.476**), and strong positive correlations to both environmental action (.601**) and overall environmentalism (.606**). This indicates the highest level of correlations among all object categories measured.

Attributing animistic essence to plants showed a very weak positive correlation with environmental concern (.164**), a strong positive correlation with action (.608**), and a weak positive correlation with overall environmentalism (.373**). Meanwhile, non-living natural objects were correlated with very weak positive correlation with concern (.057), a weak positive correlation with action (.350**), and a very weak positive correlation with overall environmentalism (.156*). Natural places yielded very weak positive correlations across concern (.119), action (.098), and overall environmentalism (.122*). Similarly, attributing animistic essence to forces of nature resulted in very weak positive correlations with concern (.026) and overall environmentalism (.150*), and a weak positive correlation with action (.340**).

When examining overall attribution of animistic essence to objects, the results show a very weak positive correlation with environmental concern (.133*), a moderate positive correlation with environmental action (.453**), and a weak positive correlation with overall environmentalism (.290**). These results suggest that while some categories, particularly animals and plants, are more strongly correlated with environmentalism, others demonstrate only minimal correlations.

Discussions

The demographic profile of the participants provides valuable context for understanding the characteristics of the sample. A significant portion of the respondents, 60.00%, were categorized as Early Adults. This suggests that the study predominantly engaged younger adults, which may influence the perspectives and experiences captured in the data. Middle Adults comprised 34.30% of the sample, while Late Adults were the least represented at 5.70%, indicating a lower level of participation from older age groups. This age distribution could reflect the accessibility or relevance of the study to different age demographics.

Sex distribution in the sample was nearly balanced, with a slight majority of female participants (52.08%) compared to males (47.92%). This relatively even distribution helps ensure that both male and female viewpoints are included in the findings, although the slight female predominance might slightly influence the overall trends observed in gender-related variables.

Educational attainment among the participants was primarily concentrated at the secondary level. Secondary Graduates made up the majority of the sample at 59.62%, while an additional 14.72% reported having reached the Secondary Level without graduating. Participants with elementary education made up 12.07% of the sample, including both graduates and those still at that level. Tertiary education was reported by 13.58% of participants, combining graduates and current tertiary-level individuals.

This distribution indicates that the sample largely consisted of individuals with moderate educational backgrounds, with fewer participants having completed or currently pursuing higher education.

Overall, the demographic data suggest a predominantly youthful and moderately educated population with a balanced representation of sexes.

The data from Tables 4 to 8 provide a comprehensive overview of the animistic customs and practices still observed by the respondents. The results indicate a wide range of beliefs and behaviors rooted in indigenous and folk traditions, with varying degrees of prevalence across the population.

The most widely practiced custom was consulting and receiving treatment from an *albularyo* or folk healer, reported by 96.98% of respondents. This high frequency underscores the strong reliance on traditional healing practices within the community. Closely following in rank were practices directly tied to respect for unseen spirits, such as uttering "tabi-tabi po, nuno" (95.09%), refraining from making noise in certain places (92.45%), and asking forgiveness from unseen beings (89.06%). These high-ranking practices suggest a deeply ingrained cultural respect for spiritual entities believed to inhabit natural surroundings. Rounding out the top five was the belief in moths or butterflies as representations of departed loved ones (88.30%). This reflects how ancestral reverence continues to manifest in daily life and household occurrences.

Practices ranked 6 through 10, such as avoiding disrespecting food (87.17%) and pinning blessed palm leaves on walls (66.42%), further illustrate how spiritual beliefs are integrated into routine domestic and environmental behaviors. The use of ritual and symbolic items—such as palm leaves, horns, or altered clothing—points to a system of belief where physical actions serve as protective or communicative acts toward the spirit world.

Moving into the mid-ranked practices (Tables 6 and 7), customs such as burning incense to ward off evil spirits (60.38%) and refraining from pointing in wilderness areas (58.11%) continue to reflect the spiritual caution embedded in everyday actions. Less frequent, but still notable, are practices like offering food to the dead (57.74%) and revering statues or images (56.23%), which reveal a blend of animistic and possibly syncretized religious elements.

Lower-ranked practices (Tables 7 and 8), such as revering baete trees (47.92%), praying to nature spirits (44.15%), and communicating with the dead (43.02%), indicate a decline in active observance but still show that these customs persist among a significant portion of the population. The use of holy cards and religious medallions (37.74%) also highlights the overlap between folk and institutional religious practices.

The least observed practices include worshiping Mariang Makiling (30.94%), using amulets (24.91%), and recognizing mythical creatures such as *dwende* or *kapre* (17.36%). The lowest-ranked was shedding animal blood in construction rituals (14.34%), a practice that may be diminishing due to modernization and shifts in cultural norms.

Overall, these findings reflect the enduring presence of animistic beliefs in contemporary life, though the frequency of their observance varies. High-ranking practices tend to be those seamlessly woven into everyday activities and personal health, while lower-ranked customs may require

specific rituals or stronger adherence to traditional roles, contributing to their reduced prevalence. This stratification of customs reveals not only the richness of cultural heritage but also its dynamic adaptation in the face of modern influences.

Several customs and practices identified in this study closely resemble those documented by Acac (2020)^[1], Cabas (2017)^[5], Cervantes (2013), Eslit (2023)^[18], Casiño (2013)^[7], Del Castillo *et al.* (2023)^[15], Macaranas (2021)^[34], Nelmidia-Flores (2021)^[40], Vicerra and Javier (2013)^[58], and Quilo *et al.* (2015)^[49]. Furthermore, many of the customs and practices observed in this research were also reported by Latayan and Latayan (2024)^[30], Latayan *et al.* (2024a), and Latayan *et al.* (2024b) in their respective studies conducted across different communities.

The results in Table 9 reveal insightful patterns in how respondents attribute animistic essence to various elements of the natural world. Among all categories, animals were attributed the highest level of animistic essence, interpreted as high. This suggests that animals are widely perceived as sentient beings with agency, emotion, and consciousness—traits that naturally align with animistic thinking. Such perceptions may be influenced by direct experiences with animals, cultural depictions, or evolutionary predispositions to empathize with living creatures.

Plants followed with a somewhat high level of attribution. Although typically not viewed as conscious in the same way animals are, plants are increasingly recognized for their complex life processes and responsiveness to the environment. These qualities may foster a sense of life or presence, contributing to their perceived animistic value.

Non-living natural objects, such as rocks or mountains, and places in nature, such as forests or rivers, were both attributed animistic qualities at a somewhat low level. While these elements may hold cultural or symbolic significance, especially in certain indigenous or spiritual traditions, the relatively lower attribution may reflect a more scientific or materialist view that regards them as inanimate and lacking agency.

Forces of nature, including elements such as wind, rain, or sunlight, received the lowest level of animistic attribution, also falling under the somewhat low category. This is a particularly interesting finding, as many traditional and spiritual belief systems—both historical and contemporary—have often personified these forces, viewing them as powerful, intentional, or even divine. The lower attribution in this study may indicate a cultural shift or generational difference, where natural forces are increasingly interpreted through a scientific lens rather than a spiritual or mythological one. Despite their dynamic and influential roles in the natural world, these forces may not be perceived as possessing individual essence or agency in the same way as animals or even plants.

Taken together, the overall pattern shows a hierarchical structure of animistic attribution: living beings, particularly animals, are most likely to be perceived as having an essence, followed by plants, with non-living elements and natural forces perceived as less animate. The general tendency across all categories reflects a somewhat high inclination toward attributing animistic qualities to nature. This suggests that while many respondents do not fully animate non-living elements, there is still a meaningful level of symbolic or emotional connection to the broader natural environment.

These findings closely align with those of Latayan and Latayan (2024) ^[30], who observed similar patterns of animistic attribution in their study on animism and environmentalism in an upland rural community in Los Baños, Laguna. Such cross-study consistency supports the notion that animistic perceptions remain a salient factor in how people relate to nature across different cultural and ecological contexts.

These findings have implications for how people form emotional and ethical relationships with nature. Recognizing what elements are perceived as "alive" or "spirit-filled" can influence environmental attitudes, conservation priorities, and educational strategies aimed at fostering deeper ecological awareness and stewardship.

The results presented in Table 10 illustrate environmentalism among the respondents, focusing on two main components: concern and action. The concern component received a mean score that falls under the "High" category, indicating that the respondents generally exhibit a strong sense of awareness and care for environmental issues. This reflects a heightened emotional and cognitive engagement with matters such as the protection of natural resources, acknowledgment of environmental problems, and the importance of sustainability.

Meanwhile, the action component yielded a slightly higher mean score, which also falls within the "High" category. This suggests that respondents are not only aware of environmental concerns but are also actively participating in behaviors that support environmental preservation. These may include practices like recycling, conserving energy and water, reducing waste, or supporting environmental programs.

The overall mean score for environmentalism likewise falls within the "High" range. This consistency between the levels of concern and actual actions implies that the respondents' environmental values are closely aligned with their behaviors. It suggests that their environmental awareness is not only theoretical but is also translated into practical, everyday decisions and habits.

These results on environmentalism closely align with the findings of Latayan *et al.* (2024a), who conducted a study on environmentalism in a riverside informal settler community in Calamba City, Laguna. The parallel in findings suggests a broader pattern of environmentally conscious attitudes and behaviors across diverse local contexts, strengthening the validity of observed trends.

These findings point to a respondent group that is both environmentally conscious and proactive, demonstrating a solid foundation for promoting or sustaining environmental initiatives within their community.

The results in Table 11 reveal important relationships between demographic profile and environmentalism, highlighting how age, education, and sex relate differently to environmentalism. Based on these findings, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between demographic profile and environmentalism is rejected.

The analysis indicates a significant negative correlation between age and environmental action, suggesting that as age increases, the likelihood of engaging in environmental actions decreases. This finding contrasts with the results of Cantillo *et al.* (2025) ^[6], who reported that older generations were more actively engaged in environmental activities. The present finding may imply that younger individuals are more

inclined to participate in environmentally friendly practices such as recycling, conserving energy, or supporting sustainability initiatives. Factors such as generational differences in environmental awareness, access to environmental education, or exposure to environmental campaigns may contribute to this trend.

Educational attainment showed a significant positive correlation with environmental concern, meaning that individuals with higher levels of education tend to express greater concern for environmental issues. This finding aligns with the results of Mandaric & Hunjet (2023), who found a positive relationship between higher educational attainment and stronger environmental attitudes and behaviors. The finding of the present research could be due to increased exposure to environmental topics in academic settings or a deeper understanding of the long-term consequences of environmental degradation. Education appears to play a role in shaping values and awareness regarding environmental stewardship.

Meanwhile, sex did not show any significant correlation with environmental concern, action, or overall environmentalism. This suggests that, within the context of this study, sex does not play a defining role in shaping individuals' attitudes or behaviors toward environmental issues.

This finding may reflect a shifting cultural dynamic in which environmental awareness and action are becoming more universal values, cutting across traditional gender lines. However, this result contrasts with the findings of Li *et al.* (2022) ^[33], who reported that women tend to be more environmentally concerned and engaged than men, suggesting that gendered socialization and traditional gender roles may influence how individuals perceive and respond to environmental issues. The lack of a significant correlation in this present study could be due to cultural context or evolving attitudes among younger generations.

Overall, these findings suggest that age and education are relevant factors influencing different dimensions of environmentalism, while sex does not appear to be a distinguishing variable. This information can be useful for designing targeted environmental education programs or campaigns, particularly those aimed at older individuals or groups with lower educational attainment.

The findings presented in Table 12 offer valuable insights into the complex relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism. While animistic beliefs are often culturally rooted in reverence for nature and unseen forces, the data reveal that not all such practices align with pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. In fact, a significant number of animistic practices appear to correlate negatively with environmental concern, action, and overall environmental orientation, challenging the common assumption that indigenous or traditional spiritual beliefs naturally support ecological stewardship. Based on these results, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between animistic customs and practices and environmentalism is rejected.

One of the few exceptions to this trend is the belief that a moth or butterfly entering the home represents a departed loved one. This practice showed a very weak but statistically significant positive relationship with environmental action and overall environmentalism. Although minimal, this positive correlation may indicate that symbolic connections between the natural world and human life can foster a sense

of respect or mindfulness toward the environment. However, this effect appears limited and is not consistently observed across other related practices.

In contrast, several practices rooted in protection from spirits or misfortune—such as the use of holy cards or medallions, turning clothes inside out in the wilderness, and carrying salt to ward off malevolent beings—exhibited weak to moderate negative correlations with environmentalism. These findings suggest that reliance on supernatural protection may substitute for active environmental responsibility or may be part of a belief system that does not emphasize ecological concern. Similarly, practices involving communication with the dead and spiritual rituals like bloodletting for construction purposes were correlated with some of the strongest negative correlations. These results point to a possible disconnection between ritualistic or magical thinking and environmental consciousness, where spiritual practices are more focused on personal or supernatural well-being than on ecological sustainability.

Interestingly, even nature-related animistic practices, such as asking spirits for a bountiful harvest or revering specific natural entities like balet trees and sacred mountains, showed weak to moderate negative correlations with environmentalism. This may seem counterintuitive, as these practices involve a direct interaction with nature. However, the data suggest that the nature being revered in these contexts is more spiritualized than ecologically understood. In other words, the respect is directed toward a mystical or symbolic representation of nature rather than a concern for biodiversity, conservation, or sustainable practices.

The consistent negative correlations across many of these practices indicate that traditional animistic beliefs, while spiritually rich and culturally significant, may not always translate into environmentally responsible behavior in the modern context. It is possible that these beliefs function within a framework that prioritizes harmony with supernatural elements rather than a scientific or ecological understanding of environmental issues. This distinction is important for environmental advocacy, as it highlights the need for culturally sensitive approaches that bridge traditional beliefs and modern ecological knowledge.

Overall, the data suggest a nuanced relationship between animism and environmentalism. While certain symbolic or respectful attitudes toward nature can positively influence environmental behavior, many animistic practices appear to be negatively correlated with ecological concern and action. These results align with the findings of Latayan *et al.* (2024b), who observed a similarly complex dynamic between animistic customs and environmentalism in an upland rural community in Labo, Camarines Norte. The parallel findings emphasize that cultural beliefs must be critically examined in relation to environmental behavior, especially when designing interventions that aim to integrate spiritual traditions with sustainability goals.

The findings in Table 13 illustrate the significant relationships between the attribution of animistic essence to various natural elements and levels of environmentalism among the respondents. These results suggest that perceiving elements of the natural world—both living and non-living—as possessing spiritual or life-like qualities is positively correlated with stronger environmental values and behaviors. Based on these results, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between attribution of animistic essence to objects and environmentalism is

rejected.

Among all categories, attribution to animals demonstrated the strongest positive correlations with environmental concern, action, and overall environmentalism. This suggests that individuals who view animals as sentient or spiritually significant beings are more likely to express care for the environment and actively engage in environmental practices. The depth of emotional or moral regard for animals may extend to broader ecological concerns, reinforcing a sense of responsibility for protecting nature.

Attribution to plants also showed significant positive correlations, particularly with environmental action and overall environmentalism. While the correlation with concern was more modest, the strong link with action implies that those who imbue plants with animistic qualities are likely to take tangible steps toward environmental protection. This may reflect a belief in the interconnectedness or sanctity of plant life, fostering behavior aligned with conservation and sustainability.

Similarly, the attribution of spirit or essence to non-living natural objects—such as stones, rivers, or mountains—was positively correlated with environmental action and overall environmentalism. Although the correlations were weaker than those for animals and plants, these findings still suggest that animistic views of the physical environment may contribute to environmentally conscious behavior, possibly due to increased respect or reverence for natural elements perceived as alive or sacred.

Attributions to natural places and forces of nature also revealed significant, though more moderate, positive correlations with overall environmentalism and action. Viewing places like forests or mountains, and natural forces like wind or rain, as imbued with spirit may inspire more thoughtful interaction with the environment, encouraging protective or respectful behaviors.

The composite attribution score, which reflects the overall tendency to attribute animistic essence across all natural categories, was positively correlated with all three dimensions of environmentalism: concern, action, and overall orientation. This suggests that a general animistic worldview—one that recognizes spirit, life, or sacredness in elements of nature—can play a meaningful role in fostering environmental values and practices.

These results are closely similar to the findings of Latayan and Latayan (2024) ^[30] in their aforementioned study on animism and environmentalism, which also reported positive correlations between animistic attributions and pro-environmental attitudes. The convergence of findings underscores the potential of animistic worldviews as culturally rooted drivers of ecological behavior.

Overall, these results indicate that animistic attributions can support and strengthen environmentalism, particularly when directed toward living elements like animals and plants but also extending to non-living and abstract natural phenomena. These findings imply that spiritual or symbolic relationships with nature may provide a motivational foundation for environmental concern and action, offering valuable cultural and psychological pathways for promoting sustainability and ecological responsibility.

Conclusion

This study examined the demographic characteristics, animistic customs and practices, attribution of animistic essence, and environmentalism among respondents. The

findings revealed that the sample was largely composed of early adults with moderate educational backgrounds and a nearly balanced sex distribution, providing a youthful and diverse perspective on the issues explored.

The results highlighted the persistence of animistic customs, with traditional practices such as consulting folk healers and showing respect to unseen spirits still highly prevalent. However, while these customs remain culturally significant, many of them demonstrated negative correlations with environmentalism, suggesting that spiritual practices rooted in protection or ritual do not always translate into ecological responsibility. This challenges assumptions that animistic traditions inherently foster environmental stewardship.

In contrast, the attribution of animistic essence to natural elements, particularly animals and plants, showed strong positive correlations with environmental concern, action, and overall orientation. These findings suggest that perceiving living and non-living elements of nature as imbued with spirit can foster pro-environmental values and behaviors. Thus, animistic attributions—more than specific ritual practices—appear to provide a cultural and psychological foundation for ecological awareness.

Demographic variables further shaped these dynamics, with younger and more educated individuals exhibiting stronger environmental orientations, while sex did not emerge as a significant factor. These insights underscore the importance of integrating cultural beliefs, generational perspectives, and educational initiatives in designing sustainability programs.

Overall, the study demonstrates that while animistic practices remain vital to cultural identity, it is the broader animistic worldview—especially the attribution of spirit to nature—that holds greater potential for nurturing environmentalism. Bridging traditional belief systems with ecological knowledge can therefore provide a culturally grounded pathway toward fostering sustainability in contemporary communities.

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