



The Role of Cultural Beliefs in Shaping Marital Practices: A Study of Mëranao Families

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of cultural beliefs and practices on the marital experiences of selected Mëranao families in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. It aims to determine how age, gender, education, civil status, family income, and occupation shape perceptions of marriage within Mëranao culture. Using a descriptive research design, data were gathered from 100 respondents through structured questionnaires and analyzed via frequency and percentage distributions. Key findings indicate that socio-demographic factors notably influence views on cultural practices, including dowry and arranged marriages. Financial challenges, particularly marriage-related expenses, were frequently cited as significant concerns. Responses also reflected generational differences, with modernization impacting traditional practices. The study concludes that Mëranao marriage customs are rooted in cultural and religious traditions but are evolving under modern influences. Recommendations emphasize cultural education, financial support programs, and community engagement to balance tradition with contemporary realities. Policy proposals highlight the need for culturally sensitive support to sustain Mëranao heritage.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the interesting subjects is how to manage and preserve traditional culture, as reported in many papers ([Millatina et al., 2022](#); [Herdian & Maryanti, 2023](#); [Arciosa et al., 2023](#); [Sugnwiset et al., 2021](#); [Ahsan et al., 2022](#); [Muliawati & Maryanti, 2022](#); [Adeoye et al., 2023](#); [Organia et al., 2023](#)). Here, this study focuses on Mëranao, a tribe in southeast Asia.

The Mëranao way of life encompasses every aspect of existence, including laws, beliefs, traditions, and more. The Mëranao tribe, one of the ethnic groups in the southern Philippines, has preserved its rich culture and beliefs since the pre-colonial era, evident in their lifestyles, traditions, and practices. This essay delves into various aspects of Mëranao culture and how they impact daily life. The Mëranao people are known for their vibrant cultural heritage, which reflects their unique location, traditions, and beliefs ([Nacua, 2018](#)). They are celebrated for their intricate art forms, such as wood carvings, metalwork, and textiles. Valuing hospitality, loyalty, and honor, the Mëranao people are deeply rooted in Islamic beliefs, which are integral to their culture ([Guimba, 2010](#)). Their weddings feature elaborate and colorful ceremonies, such as the Mëranao and Pagtabi-tabi rituals, which significantly unite couples and their families. As most Mëranao are Muslim, Islamic traditions and teachings strongly influence marriage practices, with customs and rituals meticulously observed. The groom provides a dowry, known as “Balik saad,” to the bride’s family, symbolizing commitment and honoring the bride’s worth. While marriage is a universal institution, its meaning and customs differ across cultures. In Tubod, Lanao del Norte, Mëranao traditions, beliefs, and customs profoundly shape how they enter into marriage ([Sinapanta, 2018](#)). The Mëranao people are known for their cultural distinctiveness, steeped in a deep sense of history and identity. Their Islamic faith, interwoven with indigenous customs, forms the backdrop for the institution of marriage. This fusion creates marriage ceremonies that are not only unifying events for two individuals but also rich celebrations of religious devotion, ancestral heritage, and community. Mëranao weddings, like their way of life, embody cultural resilience. This study seeks to understand the nuances of these customs, exploring practices handed down through generations. It examines traditional rituals, the extended family's role, and the significance of these customs in Mëranao culture. Religious beliefs are crucial in Mëranao family life, especially in marriage. Islamic teachings and religious leaders’ guidance add spiritual depth to marital unions, making them not just celebrations of love but divine covenants ([Tahir, 2011](#)). This study unearths how faith intertwines with Mëranao marriage, highlighting its spiritual dimensions. Arranged marriages, often misunderstood, are clarified in this study, which sheds light on the matchmaking role of parents and elders and the perceptions of the younger generation ([Salic, 2006](#)). With modernization and globalization rapidly transforming the world, assessing how these changes impact traditional marriage practices is vital ([Jamieson, 2011](#)). This study investigates the challenges Mëranao couples face and how they adapt while preserving their cultural heritage. By exploring the lives of selected Mëranao families, this research reveals an essential truth: culture is not static but a living entity shaped and reshaped by its people. It reflects history, serves as a source of identity, and guides marital journeys. This research embarks on an exploration of Mëranao culture's intricacies and beauty, offering insights into the unique cultural landscape of Mëranao society in Tubod, Lanao del Norte.

This study investigates the influence of cultural beliefs and practices in marriage among selected Mëranao families in Tubod, Lanao del Norte City, during the second semester of the school year 2023-2024. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- (i) What is the demographic profile of the respondents?;

- (ii) How do cultural beliefs and practices influence marriage among the selected respondents in terms of courtship, dowry, marriage rites, and local adats?; and
- (iii) What implications can be drawn from the findings of the study?

Finally, this study adds new information regarding religious and religion education, as reported elsewhere (Anggraeni & Maryanti, 2021; Azizah *et al.*, 2022; Camral, 2022; Jamiu, 2022; Ragadhita & Nandiyanto, 2022; Jamiu, 2022; Al Husaeni & Al Husaeni, 2022; Adeoye, 2023).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This research is anchored in the cultural theories advanced by Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson. Williams's notion of culture as a "whole way of life" and Thompson's focus on culture as the active and collective process through which groups shape their social and material existence significantly influenced post-war British cultural theory. These perspectives broadened the understanding of culture, moving beyond a narrow literary and aesthetic definition to a more holistic view that considers the lived experiences and the meaningful ways of life developed by communities. Their contributions underscore the dynamic nature of culture, emphasizing its collective, active, and material dimensions.

Additionally, this study incorporates several theoretical lenses to analyze Mëranao marriage customs comprehensively:

- (i) Cultural Relativism Theory posits that cultural practices, such as marriage customs, should be evaluated within the cultural context in which they occur. This perspective emphasizes understanding and respecting cultural traditions without imposing external judgments or norms.
- (ii) Structural-functionalism theory, as framed by Emile Durkheim, examines how cultural beliefs and practices contribute to societal stability and function. It provides a framework for analyzing how Mëranao marriage customs fulfill specific roles and sustain social order within the community.
- (iii) Symbolic Interactionism Theory, articulated by thinkers like George Herbert Mead, focuses on the meanings, symbols, and social interactions within a culture. This lens helps explore how Mëranao families perceive, interpret, and enact marriage rituals, shedding light on the social meanings embedded in these practices.
- (iv) Feminist Theory investigates the role of gender in Mëranao marriage customs, analyzing power dynamics and questioning whether these traditions perpetuate or challenge established gender roles. This perspective is essential for understanding the intersection of gender and cultural practices in marriage.
- (v) Acculturation Theory addresses the impact of modernization and external influences on traditional Mëranao marriage practices. It examines how cultural elements adapt and evolve, offering insights into how these customs are reshaped in response to external forces and changing social contexts.

Together, these theoretical frameworks provide a comprehensive foundation for exploring the complexities of Mëranao marriage customs, considering cultural traditions, social structures, meanings, gender dynamics, and the processes of cultural change.

For a clearer understanding of the perspectives of this study, the following terms are defined conceptually and operationally:

- (i) Mëranao Culture. The Mëranao people are an ethnic group indigenous to the southern Philippines, primarily inhabiting the Lanao region, including Tubod, Lanao del Norte City. They possess a distinct culture and language. In this study, Mëranao culture refers to the

collective set of beliefs, traditions, language, practices, and values unique to the Mëranao people, especially those customs and norms concerning marriage.

- (ii) Cultural Beliefs. These are the shared values, ideas, and principles that define a culture. In this study, cultural beliefs pertain to the deeply held convictions and values of the Mëranao people, particularly those that influence marriage and family life.
- (iii) Marriage Customs. These encompass the traditional practices, ceremonies, and rituals associated with weddings within Mëranao culture. In this study, marriage customs refer to the culturally specific pre-wedding, wedding day, and post-wedding practices observed during Mëranao marriages.
- (iv) Islamic Faith. The Mëranao people predominantly follow Islam, which significantly influences their marital and family practices. In this study, the Islamic faith denotes the religious beliefs and teachings of Islam as observed by the Mëranao community, shaping various aspects of marriage and family life.
- (v) Gender Roles. These are the societal expectations and responsibilities assigned to individuals based on their gender. In this study, gender roles refer to the culturally defined roles and responsibilities within Mëranao marriages, encompassing expectations related to masculinity and femininity.
- (vi) Arranged Marriages. This type of marriage involves the selection of spouses primarily made by family members rather than the individuals themselves. In this study, arranged marriages describe unions where family members, often parents, orchestrate the choice of spouses, guided by cultural and traditional practices.
- (vii) Cultural Identity. This term refers to a person's sense of belonging to a particular cultural group. In this study, cultural identity relates to how Mëranao individuals express and identify with their cultural heritage, especially through marriage practices.
- (viii) Modernization. This process involves adopting new technologies, ideas, and ways of life, leading to societal changes. In this study, modernization refers to the influence of contemporary changes on traditional Mëranao marriage customs and how modern influences impact or alter these practices.
- (ix) Cultural Resilience. This concept describes the ability of a culture to endure and adapt its customs despite external pressures. In this study, cultural resilience refers to the capacity of Mëranao culture to preserve and adapt its marriage customs and traditions in response to modern influences and challenges.

Polygyny is a significant cultural practice among the Mëranaos, defined as a man being married to two or more women simultaneously. While commonly confused with polygamy, which encompasses both polygyny and polyandry (a woman marrying multiple husbands), sociologists like [Loue \(2006\)](#) and [Jones \(2006\)](#) clarify that polygyny is the accurate term for this Maranao tradition. Deeply embedded in Maranao culture, this practice is permitted under Shari'ah or Islamic law, specifically outlined in the Qur'an, Chapter An-Nisa' (The Women), Verse 3: "Marry of the women that please you; two, three, or four, but if you fear you will not be able to deal justly, then only one." However, Islamic law emphasizes fairness and just treatment among wives, making polygyny conditional and permissible only under strict and exceptional guidelines.

The practice of polygamy within Mëranao society is influenced by various socio-demographic factors ([Abdullah, 2013](#)). High fertility rates in regions like the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) and Caraga, reported by the World Health Organization (WHO), exceed national averages. This is due to unmet needs for family planning (FP) and restricted access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. The 2017 National Demographic and Health Survey highlights low contraceptive prevalence rates as a key factor

contributing to these high fertility rates. Additionally, issues of gender-based violence intersect with marital norms, with a significant percentage of Filipino women experiencing violence from their partners (Daalen *et al.*, 2022). However, underreporting, particularly in regions like ARMM, remains a persistent challenge.

Marriage customs among the Mëranaos are further shaped by traditions such as “parental marriage,” where unions are arranged by parents, emphasizing family honor and alliances, especially among noble or royal lineages (Datukan, 2015). The dowry system, or bride price, involves a negotiated sum given by the groom’s family to the bride. Festivities like the “kandalaga” (a week-long celebration before the wedding, or “kakawing”) are an essential part of Maranao culture, showcasing the community's rich heritage and social bonds.

The persistence of practices such as arranged marriages and dowries reflects the Mëranaos’ commitment to preserving their cultural pride and identity (De Guia, 2009). However, the influence of modernization and globalization has introduced new challenges. While the Mëranaos uphold much of their heritage, they also confront evolving norms regarding gender roles and marriage expectations, navigating a delicate balance between tradition and modernity (Balo *et al.*, 2022).

Marriage dynamics across cultures are influenced by ingrained beliefs and societal expectations. In some cultures, gender roles remain strictly defined, with men as providers and women as caretakers (Hirsch, 1996). Meanwhile, more individualistic cultures emphasize personal autonomy and shared career ambitions. Multicultural marriages often encounter challenges, such as differing values around responsibilities, careers, and parenting (McLoyd *et al.*, 2000). In diverse contexts like the United States, a cultural “melting pot,” marriage dynamics continuously evolve as various practices merge. U.S. Census Bureau statistics reveal rising interracial and interethnic marriages, although these unions often face higher divorce rates due to cultural misunderstandings and unfulfilled expectations. In more traditional cultures, societal stigma against divorce keeps couples together, whereas individualistic societies are more accepting of separation when incompatibility arises (Levinger, 1976).

Mëranaos continues to navigate the tension between tradition and modernity. Despite the influence of global culture and technology, they celebrate their heritage, evident in cultural icons like the epic “Darangen,” recognized by UNESCO as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage, and the symbolic Sarimanok, representing good fortune (Milligan, 2000). Maranao communities demonstrate resilience, preserving traditions while embracing contemporary advancements.

In essence, Maranao marriage traditions, including polygyny and arranged unions, reflect a deep cultural legacy influenced by Islamic teachings and societal values (Boransing, 2012). Although modernization presents challenges, the Mëranaos’ cultural adaptability ensures that their customs endure, harmonizing tradition with the demands of an ever-changing world.

3. METHODS

3.1. Participants

The study's respondents consisted of selected Mëranao residents from Tubod, Lanao del Norte, specifically from the barangays of Kakai Renabor, Poblacion, and Bulod. In determining the respondents, this study identified the target population and calculated the appropriate sample size. A total of one hundred residents were randomly selected from the Tubod community to participate in the study (see **Table 1**).

3.2. Instrument

To gather relevant data for the study, this study administered modified survey questionnaires to the respondents to ensure alignment with the study's objectives. The questionnaire consists of two sections: the first section collects personal profile information, such as the respondents' age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and family income. The second section delves into various questions about the influence of cultural beliefs and practices in marriage on tragic events and their resolutions, focusing on selected Mëranao families in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. This approach is frequently utilized due to its efficiency in data collection.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents

Areas	Frequency	Percentage
Kakai Renabor	40	40.0%
Poblacion	30	30.0%
Bulod	30	30.0%
Total	100	100.0%

3.3. Design

This study utilized a descriptive survey method to assess the socio-demographic profiles of the respondents, examining variables such as age, gender, civil status, educational background, occupation, and family income. This research design effectively uncovers the underlying factors influencing cultural beliefs and practices in marriage among selected Mëranao families in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. The descriptive research process involved purposive data collection, which entailed analyzing, classifying, and tabulating information regarding prevailing conditions, practices, beliefs, trends, and cause-effect relationships. This method facilitates a comprehensive and accurate interpretation of the data, regardless of whether statistical treatment is employed.

3.4. Data analysis

The analysis of the collected data involved administering modified survey questionnaires to the respondents, ensuring that the content aligned with the study's objectives. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first section gathered personal profile information, such as age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and family income. The second section included a series of questions aimed at exploring the influence of cultural beliefs and practices in marriage among selected Mëranao families in Tubod, Lanao del Norte, particularly concerning tragic events and their consequences. This survey method is widely used due to its effectiveness in efficiently collecting pertinent data. The subsequent data analysis focused on examining and interpreting the responses to extract meaningful insights into the cultural dynamics present within the community.

3.5. Data Collection

The data collection process began after this study secured permission from the Barangay Chairman of the selected barangays in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. Once approval was granted, respondents were oriented about the study and their involvement in it. The research instrument was administered to the selected Mëranao families at their convenience, ensuring that completed questionnaires were promptly collected upon completion. Respondents were encouraged to reach out if they encountered any difficulties in understanding the questionnaire. Data collection utilized both primary and secondary sources. Primary data

were gathered through the distribution of questionnaires to the respondents, while secondary data were obtained from a variety of materials, including books, online resources, journals, published theses, research studies, and other relevant literature available in the library.

3.6. Ethical considerations

This research strictly adheres to the Data Privacy Act. This study obtained consent from both parents and students before the study. All data collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will solely be used to inform the data analysis and results of the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2 presents the socio-demographic profile of 100 respondents from selected Mëranao families in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. The majority of respondents (49.0%) were aged 21-25 years, with 27.0% aged 15-20, 22.0% aged 26-30, and 2.0% aged 31 and above. Gender distribution showed that 59.0% were female and 41.0% were male. In terms of civil status, 59.0% of respondents were single, while 40.0% were married, and 1.0% were widowed. Regarding education, 47.0% were college graduates, followed by 22.0% who completed high school and 19.0% who were college students. Family income data indicated that 45.0% earned less than 1,000 pesos monthly, with 36.0% earning between 1,000 and 5,000 pesos. Finally, occupation data revealed that 42.0% of respondents were farmers, 30.0% were business owners, and 15.0% were self-employed, highlighting the community's diverse economic landscape.

Table 2. Socio-demographic profile

Profile	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
According to Age	15 – 20 years old	27	27.0%
	21 – 25 years old	49	49.0%
	26 – 30 years old	22	22.0%
	31 years old and above	2	2.0%
	Total	100	100.0%
According to Gender	Female	59	59.0%
	Male	41	41.0%
	Total	100	100.0%
Civil Status	Single	59	59.0%
	Married	40	40.0%
	Widow	1	1.0%
	Total	100	100.0%
Educational Background	College Graduate	47	47.0%
	College Student	19	19.0%
	Elementary	1	1.0%
	High School	22	22.0%
	N/A	9	9.0%
	SHS	2	2.0%
	Total	100	100.0%

Table 2 (continue). Socio-demographic profile

Profile	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Family Income	Less than 1,000	45	45.0%
	1,000 – 5,000	36	36.0%
	5,000 – 10,000	11	11.0%
	10,000 – 15,000	2	2.0%
	15,000 – 20,000	1	1.0%
	Above 20,000	5	5.0%
	Total	100	100.0%
Occupation	Business	30	30.0%
	Driver	1	1.0%
	Farmer	42	42.0%
	Government Employee	6	6.0%
	Self-employed	15	15.0%
	Police	1	1.0%
	Student	4	4.0%
	Teachers	1	1.0%
	Total	100	100.0%

Table 3 illustrates respondents' perceptions of dowry practices in the Mëranao community based on mean scores and standard deviations. The statement, “The high amount of dowry negatively affects marriage,” received a mean of 4.42 (SD = 0.97), indicating disagreement with the idea that excessive dowry payments harm marriages. In contrast, the statement, “Societal status and expectations influence dowry,” had a mean of 1.29 (SD = 3.95), showing strong disagreement that societal status should dictate dowry amounts. Similarly, the responses to the statement, “Dowry contributes to financial stress within families,” yielded a mean of 1.16 (SD = 4.03), suggesting that respondents do not view dowries as major financial burdens.

Table 3. Dowry

Dowry	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Statement
1. The high amount of dowry value practices in the <i>Mëranao</i> community can affect marriage negatively.	4.4200	0.96588	Disagree
2. The Societal Status and expectations influence Dowry.	3.9500	1.29002	Strongly Disagree
3. The practice of dowry contributes to financial stress or inequalities within families that affect married couples.	4.0300	1.15867	Strongly Disagree
4. The Dowry influences the mental relationship of the spouse.	3.9000	1.33712	Strongly Disagree
5. The Dowry should have limitations to eliminate the high-paid practice.	4.0200	1.18048	Strongly Disagree

The fourth statement, “Dowry influences the mental relationship of spouses,” resulted in a mean of 1.34 (SD = 3.90), reflecting strong disagreement regarding dowry's effect on marital relationships. Lastly, the fifth statement, “Dowry should have limitations to prevent high payments,” recorded a mean of 1.18 (SD = 4.02), indicating strong disagreement with the necessity for limits on dowry amounts. Instead, respondents preferred adherence to Islamic guidelines for regulating payments. Overall, the findings highlight a collective belief that

dowry practices should be reassessed to alleviate financial pressures while maintaining cultural integrity.

Table 4 summarizes respondents' perceptions of courtship practices. The statement "Modern courtship significantly differs from traditional dating" received a mean of 1.18 (SD = 3.83), indicating strong disagreement with the idea of a significant difference. Similarly, the statement "Courtship involves a more deliberate and formal process compared to casual dating" had a mean of 1.22 (SD = 3.98), reflecting the same strong disagreement.

Respondents also strongly disagreed that cultural or societal norms influence courtship, with a mean of 1.22 (SD = 3.98) for both the statements "Cultural or societal norms influence the way of courtship" and "Cultural or societal norms shape the approach to courtship within your community." Lastly, the statement "In the context of successful courtship, mutual respect and understanding are essential" yielded a mean of 1.22 (SD = 3.98), indicating disagreement on the necessity of mutual respect and understanding in courtship. Overall, these findings suggest that respondents do not see significant differences or influences on courtship practices in their community.

Table 4. Statement of courtship

Statement of Courtship	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Statement
1. The modern courtship significantly differs from traditional dating.	3.8300	1.18112	Strongly Disagree
2. The courtship involves a more deliberate and formal process compared to casual dating.	3.9800	1.22252	Strongly Disagree
3. The cultural or societal norms influence the way of courtship.	3.9500	1.25025	Strongly Disagree
4. The cultural or societal norms shape the approach to courtship within your community.	3.9200	1.23648	Strongly Disagree
5. In the context of successful courtship, mutual respect and understanding are essential.	4.2000	1.15470	Disagree

Table 5 illustrates respondents' perceptions of marriage rites. The statement "Traditional marriage rites hold significant cultural or societal importance" received a mean of 1.01 (SD = 4.30), indicating disagreement with this assertion. Similarly, respondents disagreed with the statement "Marriage rites should be preserved to maintain cultural heritage and identity," which had a mean of 0.97 (SD = 4.22).

Table 5. Marriage rites

Marriage Rites	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Statement
1. The traditional marriage rites hold significant cultural or societal importance.	4.3000	1.01005	Disagree
2. Marriage rites be preserved to maintain cultural heritage and identity.	4.2200	0.97006	Disagree
3. Marriage rites have evolved significantly over time within your community or culture.	4.1200	1.00785	Strongly Disagree
4. External factors like modernization or globalization influence the importance or practice of traditional marriage rites.	4.1200	1.03748	Strongly Disagree
5. Marriage rites are performed compared to how they were practiced in previous generations within your community.	4.0800	1.16063	Strongly Disagree

The perception that “Marriage rites have evolved significantly over time within your community or culture” yielded a mean of 1.01 (SD = 4.12), reflecting strong disagreement. Likewise, the statement regarding the influence of external factors like modernization or globalization on traditional marriage rites received a mean of 1.04 (SD = 4.12), indicating strong disagreement as well. Finally, the statement “Marriage rites are performed differently compared to how they were practiced in previous generations” had a mean of 1.16 (SD = 4.08), also showing strong disagreement. Overall, these findings suggest that respondents do not recognize significant cultural importance or evolution in marriage rites within their community.

Table 6 presents respondents' perceptions of local adats, highlighting their views through mean scores and standard deviations. The first statement, “Local adats play a crucial role in preserving cultural identity and heritage,” received a mean of 1.01 (SD = 4.22), indicating disagreement with this assertion. The second statement, “Local adats and traditions exert a significant influence on behaviors and standards within your community,” yielded a mean of 0.97 (SD = 4.20), reflecting strong disagreement.

The third statement, “Local adats significantly influence social behavior and norms within your community,” had a mean of 1.12 (SD = 4.06), showing strong disagreement as well. Similarly, respondents disagreed with the statement “Local adats have a considerable influence on the decision-making process within your community,” which recorded a mean of 1.07 (SD = 3.94). Lastly, the statement regarding the impact of modernization and external influences on the relevance of local adats received a mean of 1.07 (SD = 3.94), indicating strong disagreement. Overall, these findings suggest that respondents do not perceive local adats as significantly influential in preserving cultural identity or shaping community behavior.

Table 6. Local Adat

Local Adat	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Statement
1. local <i>Adats</i> play a crucial role in preserving cultural identity and heritage.	4.2200	1.01085	Disagree
2. Local <i>Adats</i> and traditions exert a significant influence on the behaviors and standards within your community.	4.2000	0.97442	Strongly Disagree
3. Local <i>Adats</i> significantly influence social behavior and norms within your community.	4.0600	1.11754	Disagree
4. Local <i>Adats</i> have a considerable influence on the decision-making process within your community.	3.9400	1.07139	Strongly Disagree
5. The modernization and external influences significantly impact the adherence or relevance of local <i>Adats</i> .	4.1500	1.01876	Strongly Disagree

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the influence of cultural beliefs and practices on marriage among selected Mëranao families in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 100 respondents through a structured questionnaire and analyzed with statistical tools. The findings revealed that age, gender, educational background, civil status, family income, and occupation significantly shaped respondents' perceptions of cultural affiliations. Financial challenges, particularly regarding dowry expenses, were a major concern, with 45% of respondents reporting a monthly income of less than 1,000 pesos. Respondents generally disagreed with the notion that high dowry amounts negatively impact marriages or that societal status should influence dowry payments. They also expressed a

preference for adhering to Islamic guidelines rather than imposing limitations on dowry. Additionally, there was a lack of belief in the significance of traditional marriage rites, local adats, and the influence of modernization on these practices. Overall, the study underscores the need for education, financial support, and culturally sensitive training to address the challenges faced by Mëranao families. Advocating for policies that protect Mëranao traditions while easing financial burdens is essential to fostering a more inclusive community that upholds Mëranao values and cultural identity in Tubod.

Based on the findings and implications of this study, it is recommended that a balanced approach be adopted to preserve Mëranao cultural traditions while adapting to modern realities. Advocating for policies that respect and protect the cultural rights of the Mëranao community is crucial, particularly in promoting gender equality, human rights, and individual freedoms. Recognizing the specific roles traditionally assigned to men and women within Mëranao culture will facilitate discussions about gender dynamics and their implications for the community. Furthermore, emphasizing the significance of cultural beliefs and practices in shaping identity and heritage can foster a deeper appreciation among community members. To this end, the government should invest in educational programs that teach young people about Mëranao culture and marriage traditions, enhancing their understanding and value of their heritage. Additionally, developing guidelines or legislation that honors Mëranao customs while preventing undue financial burdens, particularly regarding marriage rites, is essential. Finally, establishing government-funded support initiatives for families facing financial difficulties related to these traditions will help alleviate the economic pressures associated with adhering to cultural practices.

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7. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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