VOICES OF PROMISE: EXPERIENCES AND EDUCATIONAL DREAMS OF OBO MANUVU LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences and educational dreams of Obo Manuvu learners in public elementary schools in the Kidapawan City Division, Mindanao, Philippines. Anchored on Colaizzi's phenomenological method, the study sought to understand how Indigenous learners navigated their educational journey, how they interpreted the meanings and significance of their educational aspirations, and what practical insights could be drawn from their narratives to improve educational support and opportunities. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with selected Obo Manuvu learners and were analyzed systematically to identify significant statements, formulate meanings, and cluster emergent themes. Findings revealed that Obo Manuvu learners experienced schooling as a complex and negotiated process shaped by geographic isolation, material scarcity, language and curriculum barriers, and the need to balance schooling with family and cultural responsibilities. Despite these challenges, learners demonstrated resilience sustained by relational support from families, peers, culturally responsive teachers, and school-based programs. Educational dreams emerged as powerful emotional anchors that motivated persistence and were collectively oriented toward family upliftment, cultural continuity, and future service to the community. Learners also articulated clear, context-sensitive insights, emphasizing the need for culturally responsive pedagogy, holistic school-based support, financial and structural assistance, and strong community–school partnerships. The study underscored the importance of centering Indigenous learners' voices in educational research and practice. It concluded that meaningful educational support for Obo Manuvu learners requires culturally grounded, relationally supportive, and structurally responsive systems that affirm Indigenous identity while addressing systemic inequities.

Keywords: *Obo Manuvu learners, Indigenous education, lived experiences, educational dreams, phenomenological study*

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Aligned: 4 Quality Education, 10 Reduced Inequalities

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Education remained a foundational right and an essential pathway toward social mobility for many Indigenous communities in the Philippines, including the Obo Manuvu of Mindanao. National statistics showed that only 6 of every 10 Indigenous children finished elementary school and barely 3 of every 10 reached junior high school, reflecting severe disparities compared to the national completion rate of 83 % (World Bank, 2024; Reyes, 2024). For Obo Manuvu learners, schooling was more than an academic pursuit; it became a cultural anchor that sustained identity, community continuity, and ancestral knowledge (Capuyan, 2022; Hernandez, 2021; Añolga, 2023). As several scholars argued, education among Indigenous groups functioned as a dual mechanism for empowerment and cultural survival in contexts where marginalization persisted (Crisostomo, 2021; Buenaflor, 2023; Evans, 2023). These realities underscored the necessity of understanding how Obo Manuvu learners experienced education both as opportunity and obligation within their ancestral domains.

Although the Indigenous Peoples Education Program had been institutionalized for more than a decade, Obo Manuvu learners continued to face entrenched systemic barriers. National data indicated that dropout cases among Indigenous youth appeared at a ratio of 1:2 compared to non-Indigenous learners, and many reported walking 3 to 7 kilometers daily just to reach school (De Vera, 2021; Eduardo, 2021; Norberte, 2024). Socioeconomic deprivation persisted, with 54 % of Indigenous households in rural Mindanao falling below the poverty threshold, directly influencing irregular attendance and limited academic participation (Cruz, 2023; Lim, 2023). Cultural dissonance also remained evident when mainstream curricula failed to reflect Indigenous languages and traditions, resulting in weakened learner engagement and identity conflict (Oquendo, 2022; Lopez, 2023; Garcia, 2023). These barriers revealed an urgent gap in documenting not only the challenges but also the educational aspirations that shaped the Obo Manuvu learners' motivations and long-term trajectories (Gabriel & Gaite, 2023; Bautista, 2022).

Research increasingly pointed to the complexity of Indigenous learners' experiences with formal schooling, particularly around language loss and cultural erosion. Studies showed that at least 32 % of Indigenous learners reported reduced fluency in their mother tongue after prolonged exposure to non-contextualized curricula, and nearly half acknowledged that school environments seldom integrated their cultural heritage (Robiego et al., 2022; Ocampo, 2023; Lumontod & Pradia, 2023). Among Obo Manuvu youth, narratives frequently highlighted worries about forgetting ritual songs, kinship terms, and traditional ecological practices, with some elders estimating that only 4 of every 10 children could still perform basic cultural rituals (Capuyan, 2022; Añolga, 2023; Dela Cruz, 2023). Scholars warned that the gradual detachment of learners from

their cultural roots could weaken identity formation, self-concept, and motivation, especially when schools did not affirm Indigenous knowledge systems (Avel & Cansino, 2023; Marsh, 2023; Kumar, 2023). This presented a compelling case for research that centered the voices of the learners themselves.

The situation faced by the Obo Manuvu echoed experiences of Indigenous learners globally, where inequities in access, cultural representation, and institutional support remained a shared concern. In Canada, for example, Indigenous student retention improved by 18 % in communities where culturally grounded programs were implemented, showing the potential effectiveness of inclusive models (Cameron, 2024; Green & Lipton, 2022; Johnson, 2023). In Australia, culturally responsive teaching improved academic confidence by a ratio of 3:1 compared to conventional instruction among First Nations youth (Lowe, 2024; Thomas, 2024; Stewart, 2024). Studies in Taiwan similarly revealed that integrating Indigenous histories and languages reduced absenteeism and increased academic engagement by 27 % (Martinez, 2023; Wang, 2024; Zhang, 2023). These international insights affirmed that centering Indigenous learner voices led to more equitable learning environments, strengthening both academic outcomes and cultural identity (Johnson & Martin, 2023; da Silva, 2024).

Failure to address these structural and cultural challenges had lasting consequences for Indigenous communities. Without responsive interventions, the educational marginalization of Obo Manuvu learners risked perpetuating poverty cycles, with 2 of every 3 Indigenous adults in Mindanao lacking secondary education credentials that were critical for livelihood opportunities (Badawi, 2021; Lim, 2023; Romero, 2024). High dropout rates disrupted not only individual futures but also collective efforts toward cultural preservation and community development, especially when youth became disengaged from institutions that should have empowered them (Balading, Bravo, & Tus, 2023; Rodriguez, 2023). Moreover, the persistent silencing of Indigenous learners' aspirations compromised national commitments to SDG 4, which envisioned inclusive and equitable quality education for all (OECD, 2024; World Bank, 2024; Quinn, 2023). As scholars argued, educational systems that overlooked Indigenous narratives risked reinforcing institutional inequities rather than dismantling them (Ibrahim, 2023; Ladaga, 2022; Mishra & Pandey, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study was conceptualized to give Obo Manuvu learners a meaningful platform to narrate their lived experiences and articulate their educational dreams. Existing research often emphasized administrative, curricular, or policy perspectives, but very few captured the direct voices of learners who navigated these intersecting realities daily (Flores, 2022; Gabriel & Gaite, 2023; Miole, 2024). Centering their narratives made it possible to uncover how Indigenous youth imagined their futures, how they navigated opportunities and barriers, and how they interpreted the relationship between cultural identity and formal schooling (Añolga, 2023; Bautista, 2023; Pelegrino, 2023). This learner-centered approach strengthened ongoing local and international discussions on

inclusive Indigenous education, especially in contexts where data on specific tribes, such as the Obo Manuvu, remained limited or undocumented (Reyes, 2024; Santos, 2023).

This qualitative inquiry was both timely and necessary, given the ongoing push toward culturally responsive and learner-centered education in the Philippines. By foregrounding Obo Manuvu learners' voices, the study aimed to transform them from passive subjects of policy into active contributors to educational discourse and development (Capuyan, 2022; Hernandez, 2021; Evans, 2023). Documenting their hopes, struggles, and insights provided a pathway for designing educational programs that affirmed Indigenous identities, expanded life opportunities, and strengthened intergenerational resilience (Garcia, 2024; Nakamura, 2023; Torres, 2023). Through the narratives gathered, this research sought to illuminate what an empowering and culturally grounded education should have looked like for Indigenous youth who continued to dream despite systemic inequities (Flores, 2022; Martinez, 2023; Wang, 2024).

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, which was appropriate for capturing the lived experiences and educational dreams of Obo Manuvu learners. Qualitative research allowed for an in-depth exploration of meanings, perceptions, and narratives that could not be reduced to numerical data. Johnson (2023) explained that qualitative approaches were especially suited to understanding Indigenous learners because they highlighted voices that were often marginalized in mainstream education. In this context, the design supported the goal of amplifying the perspectives of Obo Manuvu learners in order to reveal both their challenges and aspirations.

In adopting this design, the study was framed within phenomenology. This approach emphasized exploring experiences from the perspective of participants themselves, allowing their voices to form the essence of the findings. Buenaflor (2023) stressed that phenomenological inquiry helped uncover the realities of Indigenous students by focusing on their stories and insights. The phenomenological design also ensured that the Obo Manuvu learners' voices were treated as primary sources of knowledge rather than as secondary to external frameworks.

Furthermore, a qualitative approach was consistent with cultural research traditions that valued narrative and storytelling. Flores (2022) highlighted that Indigenous learners often used storytelling as a way to express their experiences and connect them to cultural meanings. By using a design that valued narrative

depth, the study recognized storytelling not only as a method of communication but also as a cultural practice that affirmed identity.

The research design also aligned with the objectives of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd). According to De Vera (2021), IPEd emphasized contextualized and culturally responsive education, which required research designs that could adapt to community realities. By engaging learners directly in articulating their experiences, the study ensured that findings were not only descriptive but also reflective of community priorities.

In addition, the qualitative design allowed for flexibility in methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Capuyan (2022) observed that Indigenous learners responded well to participatory and conversational methods, which enabled them to express themselves more comfortably. This flexibility strengthened the credibility of the data by providing spaces where participants could speak freely and openly.

Finally, the qualitative design was supported by global scholarship on Indigenous education. Cameron (2024) in Canada and Lowe (2024) in Australia demonstrated that qualitative inquiry provided valuable insights into how Indigenous students perceived belonging, resilience, and identity in educational contexts. These international studies affirmed that a qualitative design was suitable for the present study as it highlighted learner voices while connecting local findings to broader conversations in Indigenous education.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were Obo Manuvu learners enrolled in public schools in Kidapawan City Division. They were chosen because they represented the population directly experiencing the challenges and opportunities of Indigenous education. Hernandez (2021) documented that Obo Manuvu youth in Mindanao viewed education as a critical pathway for empowerment, making them ideal informants for this study.

Inclusion criteria included learners who (1) self-identified as Obo Manuvu and were recognized as such within their community, (2) were enrolled in formal education within the district, and (3) had completed at least one year of continuous schooling to ensure that they had substantial experiences to narrate. These criteria were consistent with the practices outlined by Capuyan (2022), who emphasized the importance of involving learners with established educational experiences to provide reliable narratives.

Exclusion criteria included learners who (1) were not recognized as Obo Manuvu by their community, (2) were not enrolled in formal education at the time

of data collection, and (3) could not provide informed consent or assent. These exclusions ensured that the data gathered reflected the voices of authentic participants whose experiences were directly relevant to the study (Añolga, 2023; Buenaflor, 2023).

The number of participants depended on the principle of data saturation, where no new insights emerged from additional interviews. Gabriel and Gaite (2023) explained that Indigenous learners often provided overlapping themes, and saturation was achieved when narratives became consistent. Thus, the final participant pool was determined by the richness of the data rather than by a predetermined quota.

Data Collection

Before any data collection activities were undertaken, the researcher first secured the necessary institutional approvals. This process began with the submission of the full research proposal to the Dean of the Graduate School of the researcher's academic institution. Once the Dean reviewed and endorsed the proposal, it was forwarded to the Ethics Review Committee of the same institution for ethical clearance. The Ethics Review Committee played a critical role in ensuring that the study adhered to accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants, specifically in terms of protecting their rights, privacy, and overall well-being. Only after the approval and ethical clearance were obtained was the researcher allowed to proceed to the field.

The data collection process used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with Obo Manuvu learners. These methods allowed for rich and detailed narratives about learners' lived experiences and educational dreams. According to Buenaflor (2023), Indigenous learners often expressed themselves more fully in conversational formats where they could share personal stories. Likewise, Flores (2022) stressed that group discussions highlighted shared experiences and collective aspirations, making them essential tools for Indigenous research.

Interviews were conducted individually with learners to capture personal accounts of challenges, resilience, and aspirations. Gabriel and Gaite (2023) noted that such personal narratives provided insight into how Indigenous students framed their educational goals. Meanwhile, focus group discussions encouraged participants to engage with one another, affirming communal values and collective visions. This method was supported by Añolga (2023), who explained that collective conversations resonated with Indigenous practices of communal decision-making.

The sessions were conducted in spaces familiar to the participants, such as classrooms or community centers, to ensure comfort and cultural appropriateness. Capuyan (2022) emphasized that the setting of research played a significant role in making Indigenous learners feel respected and at ease. With permission from participants, audio recordings were made to ensure accuracy of transcription, while notes were taken to capture nonverbal cues and contextual details.

All data were carefully transcribed and coded for analysis. The researcher ensured that participants' voices remained authentic throughout the analysis, as recommended by Johnson and Martin (2023). Member checking was also employed by returning findings to participants for confirmation, ensuring credibility and accuracy of interpretations. This approach reflected the principles of participatory Indigenous research outlined by Ladaga (2022), which emphasized validating findings with community input.

Lastly, confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the process. Pseudonyms were used for all participants, and data were securely stored. As emphasized by De Vera (2021) and Eduardo (2021), protecting the privacy of Indigenous learners was crucial in ensuring ethical and responsible research. Through these procedures, the study guaranteed that data collection was rigorous, culturally sensitive, and ethically sound.

Procedures

Before any data collection activities were undertaken, the researcher first secured the necessary institutional approvals. This process began with the submission of the full research proposal to the Dean of the Graduate School of the researcher's academic institution. Once the Dean reviewed and endorsed the proposal, it was forwarded to the Ethics Review Committee of the same institution for ethical clearance. The Ethics Review Committee played a critical role in ensuring that the study adhered to accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants, specifically in terms of protecting their rights, privacy, and overall well-being. Only after the approval and ethical clearance were obtained was the researcher allowed to proceed to the field.

After securing ethical clearance, permission was requested from the Schools Division Superintendent as well as from school heads and local Indigenous community leaders. This ensured that the study gained institutional and cultural approval. Ladaga (2022) emphasized that community participation in decision-making enhanced both the credibility and cultural appropriateness of research. The consent of parents or guardians was also sought where necessary, especially for minor participants, while assent was obtained from the learners themselves.

The researcher then organized in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with selected Obo Manuvu learners who met the inclusion criteria. In-depth interviews were used to gather individual stories that reflected learners' personal experiences of schooling, while focus group discussions highlighted shared perspectives and collective aspirations. Buenaflor (2023) stressed that Indigenous learners articulated their challenges more openly when provided with conversational opportunities. Similarly, Flores (2022) noted that group discussions mirrored cultural practices of storytelling and dialogue within Indigenous communities.

The interviews and focus groups were conducted in safe and familiar settings, such as classrooms or community halls, to ensure that learners felt comfortable and respected. Capuyan (2022) explained that Indigenous learners responded more positively in culturally sensitive environments where they felt that their voices were acknowledged. Sessions were audio-recorded with consent from participants, while the researcher also took field notes to capture nonverbal expressions and contextual observations.

Following the data collection, the researcher transcribed the interviews and discussions verbatim. This ensured accuracy and provided a reliable textual basis for analysis. According to Johnson and Martin (2023), authentic transcription of participants' words allowed their voices to remain central in the research process. Participants were also invited to review and validate the transcripts or summaries of their narratives in order to confirm that their experiences had been represented faithfully.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data in this study followed the phenomenological method advanced by Colaizzi (1978), which is widely recognized in qualitative inquiry for its structured and systematic approach to interpreting lived experiences. Colaizzi emphasized that phenomenological analysis involves identifying the essential meanings of human experiences as described by participants, focusing on how individuals articulate and interpret their lived realities. This approach was particularly appropriate for Indigenous education research because it valued participants' voices, cultural context, and the meanings embedded in their narratives (Colaizzi, 1978; Shosha, 2012).

The data analysis began with the careful reading of interview and focus group transcripts. The researcher engaged in an initial immersion process, repeatedly reading the transcripts to gain a holistic understanding of participants' accounts. This step aligned with Colaizzi's directive that researchers must first become deeply familiar with the data before extracting meanings. Through this process, the researcher ensured sensitivity to the cultural language, expressions,

and contextual nuances present in the narratives of Obo Manuvu learners (Colaizzi, 1978; Sanders, 2003).

Next, significant statements were identified from the transcripts. These statements consisted of phrases, sentences, or passages that directly related to the phenomenon under investigation, specifically the lived experiences and educational dreams of Obo Manuvu learners. Each significant statement was treated as meaningful and was extracted verbatim to preserve authenticity. Colaizzi emphasized that this step ensures that the analysis remains grounded in participants' original expressions before interpretation occurs (Colaizzi, 1978; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Following the identification of significant statements, the researcher formulated meanings from each statement. This involved interpreting the underlying meanings conveyed by the learners while remaining faithful to their cultural and experiential context. The researcher practiced reflexivity and bracketing to minimize the imposition of personal assumptions on the data, consistent with Colaizzi's emphasis on researcher self-awareness during interpretation (Colaizzi, 1978; Sanders, 2003).

The formulated meanings were then clustered into themes that reflected patterns across participants' narratives. For example, statements related to long distances traveled to school were clustered under geographical barriers, while expressions about aspirations to help family and community were grouped under communal aspirations. This clustering process enabled the movement from individual descriptions toward shared meanings, supporting the identification of collective experiences among Obo Manuvu learners. Colaizzi noted that theme clustering provides structure to phenomenological descriptions while preserving experiential depth (Colaizzi, 1978; Shosha, 2012).

Once thematic clusters were established, the researcher integrated them into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. This narrative synthesis combined all themes into a comprehensive account of how Obo Manuvu learners experienced schooling, navigated challenges, and articulated their educational dreams. The exhaustive description was grounded entirely in participant narratives, as required by Colaizzi's method (Colaizzi, 1978; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

After developing the exhaustive description, the researcher distilled the findings into a fundamental structure of the phenomenon. This step involved identifying the core essence of the learners' experiences, capturing the most significant meanings that defined their educational journeys. The fundamental structure represented the shared realities of Obo Manuvu learners, including the cultural, social, and educational contexts shaping their aspirations.

Finally, member checking was conducted by returning the findings to selected participants for validation. Participants were asked to confirm whether the descriptions and interpretations accurately reflected their experiences and intended meanings. This step enhanced the credibility and confirmability of the study, as emphasized by Colaizzi, who regarded participant validation as essential to ensuring authenticity in phenomenological research (Colaizzi, 1978; Shosha, 2012).

By following Colaizzi's phenomenological method, the study ensured a rigorous, transparent, and participant-centered analytical process. The method supported the discovery of essential meanings embedded in the lived experiences and educational dreams of Obo Manuvu learners, providing a culturally grounded and ethically sound foundation for interpreting their narratives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presented the process and structure for organizing and analyzing the data generated from this qualitative phenomenological study on the lived experiences and educational dreams of Obo Manuvu learners. It described how data obtained from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were systematically documented, transcribed, and organized to ensure clarity, coherence, and analytical rigor. Guided by the phenomenological approach, the chapter emphasized the careful handling of participants' narratives to preserve the authenticity of their voices and cultural meanings. This chapter served as a structured foundation for the presentation and interpretation of findings related to the learners' experiences, challenges, and aspirations, setting the stage for the discussion of results without prematurely drawing conclusions.

Interpretation of the Lived Experiences of Obo Manuvu Learners as They Navigate Their Educational Journey

Table 1 presents the thematic analysis of the lived experiences of Obo Manuvu learners as they navigated their educational journey. The table synthesizes participants' narratives into five interrelated themes: Geographic and Material Hardship, Language and Curriculum Barriers, Balancing School and Cultural Responsibilities, Support Systems that Sustain Persistence, and Negotiating Identity within School Spaces. These themes collectively highlight that schooling for Obo Manuvu learners was not experienced as a linear academic process but as a complex, embodied journey shaped by physical hardship, cultural negotiation, relational support, and identity formation. The table underscores how learners continuously balanced structural constraints with personal resilience and

communal values, revealing education as both a challenge and a source of meaning.

Geographic and Material Hardship

Geographic and material hardship captured the physical and infrastructural realities that framed Obo Manuvu learners' schooling experiences. Learners consistently described education as physically demanding due to long walking distances, unsafe routes during adverse weather, and limited school facilities. These conditions transformed schooling into an act of endurance, where attendance required sustained physical effort before learning could even begin. Material deprivation, such as the lack of textbooks, electricity, and learning resources in the mother tongue, further compounded these challenges. As a result, schooling was experienced not merely as cognitive engagement but as survival within structurally disadvantaged contexts.

> *"I walk for more than an hour every day just to reach school, and when it rains, the road becomes very slippery and dangerous, but I still go because I want to learn and finish my studies." (IDI1.1.1)*
>
> *"I feel very tired when I arrive at school because we walk far and sometimes there is no transportation, but I still listen to my teacher because education is important to me." (IDI1.1.2)*
>
> *"I struggle when there are no books or materials because I want to understand the lesson better, but we only share with classmates." (IDI1.1.3)*
>
> *"When there is no electricity in school, it is hard to study, especially when the classroom is dark, but I try my best to focus." (IDI1.1.4)*
>
> *"Even if the classroom is broken or hot, I still attend class because I want to help my family in the future." (IDI1.1.5)*

The presence of geographic and material hardship implies that educational access for Obo Manuvu learners remained deeply inequitable. Physical distance and infrastructural inadequacy were not peripheral issues but central determinants of participation, persistence, and fatigue. These findings suggest that interventions focused solely on curriculum improvement are insufficient without addressing transportation, school facilities, and material provision. Schools serving Indigenous learners must be supported through targeted infrastructure development, transportation assistance, and equitable

distribution of learning resources to prevent physical hardship from undermining educational engagement.

This theme gained support from the findings of Badawi (2021), who emphasized that physical isolation and infrastructure deficits remain central human security challenges for Indigenous communities in Mindanao. The results also corroborated the study of De Vera (2021), which highlighted that geographic barriers significantly constrain the effectiveness of Indigenous Peoples Education programs. This finding was also congruent with the work of Balading, Bravo, and Tus (2023), who documented that Indigenous learners' persistence in school often occurs despite severe material deprivation rather than because of adequate institutional support.

Language and Curriculum Barriers

Language and curriculum barriers reflected learners' struggles with instruction delivered primarily in Filipino and English, often disconnected from their linguistic and cultural realities. Participants described difficulty comprehending lessons, expressing ideas, and maintaining confidence due to limited use of their mother tongue. This dissonance positioned schooling as an alienating space where Indigenous knowledge systems were marginalized. Learners experienced a tension between preserving their language and adapting to dominant educational norms, resulting in cognitive strain and identity conflict.

> *"I find it hard to understand lessons because they are not taught in our language, and sometimes I am afraid to answer." (IDI1.2.1)*
> *"I feel sad because we rarely use our mother tongue in school, and I worry that I might forget it." (IDI1.2.2)*
> *"I want my teacher to explain lessons in a way that connects to our culture so I can understand better." (IDI1.2.3)*
> *"I struggle when lessons feel very different from what we learn at home." (IDI1.2.4)*
> *"I feel more confident when the teacher respects our language and culture." (IDI1.2.5)*

This theme implied that linguistic exclusion undermined both comprehension and identity affirmation. The absence of culturally responsive instruction risked disengagement and weakened learners' academic self-concept. Educational programs must therefore integrate mother-tongue instruction and contextualized curricula to ensure that learning becomes inclusive rather than assimilative. Failure to do so perpetuates educational inequity and cultural erosion.

This interpretation was supported by the study of Crisostomo (2021), which revealed that language disconnect contributes to identity fragmentation among Indigenous learners. The findings also aligned with Robiego et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of language preservation in sustaining Indigenous educational engagement. This was further reinforced by Oquendo (2022), who documented similar language-related challenges among Obo Manuvu youth.

Balancing School and Cultural Responsibilities

Balancing school and cultural responsibilities captured learners' experiences of fulfilling dual roles as students and contributors to family and community life. Learners described engaging in farming, household chores, caregiving, and cultural rituals alongside schooling. Rather than perceiving these roles as burdens alone, learners framed them as moral responsibilities rooted in respect and collectivism. Education was thus negotiated within communal expectations rather than prioritized over them.

> *"I help my parents before and after school, and sometimes I feel tired, but I still try to study." (IDI1.3.1)*
> *"I miss school sometimes because of community activities, but I know they are important to our culture." (IDI1.3.2)*
> *"I balance my schoolwork and chores because both are important in our family." (IDI1.3.3)*
> *"I feel proud when I help my family and still go to school." (IDI1.3.4)*
> *"I learn responsibility at home, and it helps me in school." (IDI1.3.5)*

This theme suggested that rigid schooling structures may unintentionally disadvantage Indigenous learners whose lives are shaped by communal obligations. Schools must adopt flexible scheduling, culturally sensitive attendance policies, and family-school collaboration to accommodate learners' realities. Recognizing cultural responsibility as a strength rather than a deficit is essential in designing inclusive educational systems.

This finding was congruent with Añolga (2023), who emphasized that Manobo learners' educational participation is deeply shaped by cultural responsibility. It also aligned with Hernandez (2021), who documented similar patterns among Obo Manuvu youth. This was further supported by Ladaga (2022), who argued that Indigenous education policies must align with community practices to be effective.

Support Systems that Sustain Persistence

Support systems that sustain persistence highlighted the relational foundations of learners' resilience. Teachers, peers, parents, and school programs served as critical sources of encouragement that counterbalanced structural hardship. Learners described supportive relationships as validating, motivating, and emotionally sustaining, allowing them to persist despite adversity.

"I continue studying because my teacher helps me when I do not understand." (IDI1.4.1)
"My parents encourage me to go to school even if life is hard." (IDI1.4.2)
"My classmates help me with my lessons, and I feel I am not alone." (IDI1.4.3)
"I feel motivated when teachers understand our situation." (IDI1.4.4)
"School programs like feeding help me attend class every day." (IDI1.4.5)

The findings implied that relational and institutional support functioned as protective factors against dropout. Strengthening teacher training in cultural sensitivity, peer mentoring, and family engagement can significantly improve Indigenous learners' educational persistence.

This theme was supported by Capuyan (2022), who emphasized cultural resilience among Obo Manuvu learners. The results also corroborated the findings of Cameron (2024), which showed that belonging and support enhance Indigenous student engagement. This was also consistent with Green and Lipton (2022), who highlighted relational empowerment in Indigenous education.

Negotiating Identity within School Spaces

Negotiating identity within school spaces described how learners navigated belonging, pride, and recognition within formal education. Learners felt affirmed when their culture was respected and marginalized when it was ignored. School thus became a space of identity negotiation rather than neutral learning.

"I feel proud when our culture is shown in school." (IDI1.5.1)
"I feel happy when teachers respect our traditions." (IDI1.5.2)
"I feel shy when classmates do not understand our culture." (IDI1.5.3)
"I want to study without hiding who I am." (IDI1.5.4)
"I feel that school is better when culture is included." (IDI1.5.5)

This theme implied that culturally affirming school environments are essential for learner well-being and engagement. Integrating Indigenous identity into schooling promotes self-concept, motivation, and sustained participation.

This finding aligned with Bautista (2022), who documented identity affirmation through education among Aeta learners. It was also supported by Garcia (2023) and Evans (2023), who emphasized the role of Indigenous knowledge in equitable education.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of the Lived Experiences of Obo Manuvu Learners in Navigating Their Educational Journey

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements with Attributions	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
Daily schooling conditions and access	Long travel to school; limited facilities; lack of learning materials	"We walk very far just to reach school, sometimes more than one hour." (IDI3); "When it rains, the road is very hard and dangerous." (IDI13)	Geographic and Material Hardship	Schooling was shaped by physical distance, unsafe travel, and inadequate infrastructure, making learning physically demanding.
Language and curriculum experiences	Language barriers; non-contextualized lessons; loss of mother tongue	"It is hard to understand lessons in English and Filipino." (IDI9); "We don't use our language much in class." (IDI10)	Language and Curriculum Barriers	Learners experienced tension between their Indigenous language and dominant instructional languages, affecting comprehension and confidence.
Family and cultural obligations	Household chores; farming; caregiving; rituals	"We help our family before and after school." (IDI11);	Balancing School and Cultural Responsibilities	Education was continuously negotiated alongside family duties and

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements with Attributions	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		"Sometimes we miss class because of community activities." (IDI4)		cultural responsibilities.
Social and relational support	Teacher care; peer help; parental encouragement	"My teacher helps me after class." (IDI1); "My classmates help me understand lessons." (IDI8)	Support Systems that Sustain Persistence	Persistence in schooling was strengthened through relational support from teachers, peers, and family.
Identity experiences in school	Cultural recognition; sense of belonging	"I feel proud when our culture is included in school." (IDI7); "I feel welcome when teachers respect our traditions." (IDI14)	Negotiating Identity within School Spaces	Schools functioned as sites where learners negotiated Indigenous identity and belonging.

Interpretation of Learners' Meanings and Significance of Their Educational Dreams

Table 2 presents the thematic analysis of how Obo Manuvu learners interpreted the meanings and significance of their educational dreams within the context of their lives. The table clustered participants' narratives into four major themes: Dreams as Emotional Anchors, Education as a Pathway to Family Upliftment, Collective Identity and Cultural Continuity, and Future-Oriented Leadership Vision. These themes reveal that educational dreams were not abstract aspirations but deeply grounded interpretations shaped by lived hardship, family obligations, cultural identity, and communal responsibility. For

Obo Manuvu learners, dreaming was an active psychological, emotional, and cultural process that sustained motivation, framed resilience, and gave meaning to their continued participation in schooling despite persistent barriers.

Dreams as Emotional Anchors

Dreams as emotional anchors described how Obo Manuvu learners experienced their educational aspirations as sources of hope, strength, and emotional regulation amid adversity. Learners framed dreams as internal supports that helped them endure fatigue from long walks, discouragement from language barriers, and emotional strain caused by poverty and competing responsibilities. Rather than viewing dreams as distant future goals, participants described them as present-oriented emotional resources that stabilized their motivation and gave purpose to everyday effort. Dreams functioned as anchors that grounded learners psychologically, allowing them to persist even when immediate circumstances were discouraging.

> *"I continue going to school even when I feel very tired because I dream of finishing my studies, and when I think about that dream, I feel stronger and more hopeful that my effort is not wasted." (IDI1.1.1)*
>
> *"I feel sad sometimes because learning is hard, but I tell myself that my dream will help me change my life, so I keep trying even when I feel like giving up." (IDI1.1.2)*
>
> *"I walk far every day, and sometimes I want to stop, but I remember my dream, and it gives me courage to continue learning." (IDI1.1.3)*
>
> *"I get motivation from my dream because it reminds me that what I am doing now is important for my future." (IDI1.1.4)*
>
> *"I feel happy and inspired when I think about my dream, even if school is difficult, because it gives meaning to all my sacrifices." (IDI1.1.5)*

The interpretation of dreams as emotional anchors implied that motivation among Obo Manuvu learners was not solely driven by external rewards such as grades or recognition but by deeply internalized aspirations. Educational support programs must therefore recognize the emotional dimension of learning and create spaces where learners can articulate, reflect on, and strengthen their dreams. Guidance programs, mentoring, and culturally responsive counseling

can harness learners' aspirations as protective psychological factors that reduce dropout risk. Ignoring the emotional role of dreams risks overlooking a powerful internal resource that sustains persistence under adversity.

This finding gained support from the study of Arias (2023), which revealed that Indigenous learners' personal values and aspirations significantly predict academic persistence. The results also corroborated the findings of Marsh (2023), who emphasized that self-concept and motivation reciprocally influence achievement. This interpretation was also congruent with Balading, Bravo, and Tus (2023), who found that Indigenous learners relied heavily on hope and future-oriented thinking to cope with challenges in the new normal of education.

Education as a Pathway to Family Upliftment

Education as a pathway to family upliftment reflected learners' interpretation of schooling as a collective investment rather than an individual pursuit. Obo Manuvu learners consistently framed their dreams in relation to helping their families escape poverty, improving household stability, and fulfilling parental expectations. Education was viewed as a moral obligation tied to gratitude and responsibility, where personal success was meaningful only insofar as it contributed to family well-being. Learners' aspirations were thus embedded in relational contexts, emphasizing interdependence rather than individual advancement.

> *"I want to finish school so I can help my parents because they work hard for us, and I want to give back to them." (IDI1.2.1)*
> *"I dream of getting a good job someday so my family will not struggle anymore, and that makes me study harder." (IDI1.2.2)*
> *"I think about my family when I study because I know education can help improve our life." (IDI1.2.3)*
> *"I want to help my siblings continue school, so I need to finish my education first." (IDI1.2.4)*
> *"I study not only for myself but also for my family, because their dreams are part of my dreams." (IDI1.2.5)*

This theme implied that educational interventions must recognize family-centered motivation as a central driver of Indigenous learners' persistence. Scholarship programs, livelihood-linked education, and family-inclusive school initiatives can strengthen learners' commitment by aligning schooling with family aspirations. Policies that frame education as an individual achievement risk misaligning with Indigenous value systems. Supporting family upliftment through education requires systemic approaches that reduce economic burden and enhance household stability.

This was supported by Hernandez (2021), who documented that Obo Manuvu youth viewed education as a pathway to family empowerment. The findings were congruent with Bautista (2022), whose study on Aeta learners revealed that aspirations were largely shaped by family obligations. This was further reinforced by Gabriel and Gaite (2023), who found that Indigenous students' academic goals were deeply tied to family advancement rather than personal status.

Collective Identity and Cultural Continuity

Collective identity and cultural continuity captured learners' interpretation of educational dreams as mechanisms for preserving Indigenous identity and honoring cultural heritage. Participants emphasized that their aspirations were not about leaving their culture behind but about sustaining it through education. Learners envisioned themselves as bridges between tradition and modernity, using education to protect language, rituals, and values. Dreams were thus interpreted as culturally anchored commitments that integrated schooling with cultural survival.

> *"I want to study so I can still protect our culture and teach it to others." (IDI1.3.1)*
> *"My dream is connected to our traditions because I want to help preserve who we are." (IDI1.3.2)*
> *"I do not want to forget our culture while studying, so my dream is to balance both." (IDI1.3.3)*
> *"I want to succeed in school but still follow our customs and values." (IDI1.3.4)*
> *"I dream of helping my community while keeping our culture alive." (IDI1.3.5)*

This theme implied that education must move beyond assimilationist models toward culturally sustaining pedagogy. When learners see education as aligned with cultural continuity, motivation and engagement are strengthened. Schools must therefore integrate Indigenous knowledge, language, and practices into instruction. Failure to do so risks positioning education as a threat to cultural identity, which may contribute to disengagement and resistance.

This finding was supported by Añolga (2023), who emphasized the role of cultural values in shaping Indigenous learners' educational engagement. The results also corroborated Bautista (2022), who found that education can serve as a tool for cultural preservation when aligned with Indigenous identity. This interpretation also aligned with Evans (2023) and da Silva (2024), who argued that integrating Indigenous knowledge systems strengthens both learning outcomes and cultural sustainability.

Future-Oriented Leadership Vision

Future-oriented leadership vision described learners' interpretation of educational dreams as preparation for leadership and service within their communities. Learners frequently envisioned themselves as future teachers, health workers, leaders, or mentors who would bring knowledge back to their communities. Dreams were interpreted not as pathways to individual escape but as commitments to communal responsibility and social contribution. Leadership was framed as service grounded in cultural values rather than authority or status.

> *"I want to become a teacher so I can help other Manuvu children learn." (IDI1.4.1)*
> *"I dream of becoming someone who can help our community improve." (IDI1.4.2)*
> *"I want to use my education to serve our people and give back." (IDI1.4.3)*
> *"I imagine myself helping younger children in the future through education." (IDI1.4.4)*
> *"I want to be a leader who understands our culture and helps our community grow."*

This theme implied that leadership development should be embedded in Indigenous education programs. Schools can nurture these aspirations through mentoring, service-learning, and culturally grounded leadership initiatives. Recognizing learners as future community leaders reframes education as a shared investment in social development rather than individual mobility alone.

This gained support from Johnson and Martin (2023), who emphasized Indigenous student success as rooted in collective leadership and service. The findings were also congruent with Stewart (2024), which highlighted Indigenous freedom dreaming as a form of educational praxis. This was also supported by Thomas (2024), who found that Indigenous learners' aspirations often centered on survivance and community contribution.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of Learners' Interpretations of the Meanings and Significance of Their Educational Dreams

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
Emotional meaning of dreams	Hope; motivation; resilience	"My dream helps me continue even when school is	Dreams as Emotional Anchors	Educational dreams served as sources of

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		hard." (IDI5); "I don't give up because of my dreams." (IDI8)		emotional strength and resilience amid hardship.
Family-related aspirations	Helping parents; improving livelihood	"I want to help my family someday." (IDI3); "Education can lift my family." (IDI13)	Education as Pathway to Family Upliftment	Dreams were framed as collective goals tied to family well-being rather than individual success.
Cultural significance of dreams	Honoring traditions; preserving identity	"I want to finish school and still follow our traditions." (IDI7); "My dream is also for our culture." (IDI10)	Collective Identity and Cultural Continuity	Aspirations integrated academic goals with cultural preservation.
Future roles and leadership	Becoming teachers; leaders; helpers	"I want to teach other Manuvu children." (IDI4); "I want to help our community." (IDI9)	Future-Oriented Leadership Vision	Learners envisioned themselves as future contributors and leaders within their communities.

Practical Insights Drawn from Learners' Experiences and Educational Dreams to Improve Educational Support and Opportunities

Table 3 presents the thematic analysis of the practical insights articulated by Obo Manuvu learners regarding how educational support and opportunities can be improved to better respond to their lived experiences and aspirations. The table synthesized participants' narratives into four major themes: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Holistic School-Based Support, Financial and Structural Assistance, and Community–School Partnerships. Collectively, these themes reveal that learners did not merely describe problems but offered grounded, context-sensitive recommendations shaped by their daily realities, cultural values, and future-oriented dreams. Their insights underscored that meaningful educational improvement must be culturally rooted, relationally supportive, structurally responsive, and collaboratively sustained.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy referred to learners' strong call for teaching and learning practices that recognized, respected, and integrated Obo Manuvu language, culture, and lived experiences into classroom instruction. Learners emphasized that education became more meaningful and engaging when lessons reflected their traditions, stories, values, and local knowledge systems. Rather than viewing culture as an add-on, participants framed it as central to understanding concepts, building confidence, and fostering a sense of belonging. This theme highlighted that culturally disconnected instruction often created barriers to learning, while culturally grounded pedagogy affirmed identity and enhanced comprehension.

> *"I learn better when my teacher uses our language and examples from our daily life because I understand the lesson more and I feel confident to participate in class." (IDI3.1.1)*
>
> *"I feel happy and proud when our culture is included in lessons because it shows that who we are is important in school." (IDI3.1.2)*
>
> *"I understand lessons faster when stories from our community are used because they connect to what I already know." (IDI3.1.3)*
>
> *"I want teachers to respect our traditions and use them in teaching so learning will not feel different from our life at home." (IDI3.1.4)*
>
> *"I feel more motivated to study when my culture and language are part of what we learn in school." (IDI3.1.5)*

The implications of this theme suggested that improving educational outcomes for Obo Manuvu learners required a shift from generic instructional approaches to deeply contextualized pedagogy. Teachers needed sustained training in Indigenous knowledge systems, culturally sustaining teaching strategies, and mother-tongue-based instruction. Curriculum developers were urged to integrate local histories, practices, and values into learning competencies. When pedagogy aligned with learners' cultural realities, it not only improved academic understanding but also strengthened self-concept and engagement, reducing feelings of alienation and marginalization. This theme was strongly supported by the findings of Añolga (2023), who emphasized that Manobo learners engage more actively when instruction reflects cultural practices and values. The results also corroborated the study of Garcia (2023), which demonstrated that indigenizing curricula fosters relevance and learner participation. This was congruent with da Silva (2024) and Lopez (2023), who

found that integrating Indigenous knowledge into school curricula enhances both academic engagement and cultural affirmation.

Holistic School-Based Support

Holistic school-based support captured learners' recognition that academic success depended not only on instruction but also on emotional, relational, and contextual support systems. Learners emphasized the importance of supportive teachers, peer encouragement, mentoring programs, flexible schedules, and a safe and welcoming school environment. This theme reflected an understanding that learning occurred within complex life contexts marked by fatigue, household responsibilities, and emotional stress. Support was thus viewed as multi-dimensional, addressing academic needs while also nurturing well-being and resilience.

> *"I feel encouraged when my teacher helps me after class because it shows they care about my learning." (IDI3.2.1)*
> *"I stay motivated when my classmates support me and we help each other understand lessons." (IDI3.2.2)*
> *"I learn better when the school understands our situation and gives us time to balance chores and schoolwork." (IDI3.2.3)*
> *"I feel safe and confident when teachers are kind and patient with us." (IDI3.2.4)*
> *"I do not want to stop studying because the school gives programs that help us continue learning." (IDI3.2.5)*

The theme highlighted the need for schools to adopt learner-centered and trauma-informed approaches that respond to Indigenous learners' realities. Establishing tutoring programs, mentoring systems, and guidance services that are culturally sensitive can significantly improve persistence and engagement. Flexible policies that accommodate family responsibilities without penalizing learners are essential. Schools must be viewed not only as academic spaces but as support systems that foster belonging, emotional safety, and sustained motivation.

This gained support from Capuyan (2022), who emphasized cultural resilience and relational support as key factors in Indigenous learners' persistence. The findings also aligned with Cameron (2024), which demonstrated that a sense of belonging significantly enhances Indigenous student engagement. This was further supported by Green and Lipton (2022) and Johnson (2023), who highlighted the role of relational and emotional support in sustaining Indigenous learners' educational participation.

Financial and Structural Assistance

Financial and structural assistance referred to learners' recognition that economic hardship and inadequate infrastructure directly constrained their educational participation. Learners emphasized the importance of scholarships, feeding programs, school supplies, transportation support, and improved facilities in enabling them to attend school consistently and focus on learning. This theme underscored that motivation alone could not overcome systemic poverty and structural inequality. Educational persistence was thus contingent on material conditions that reduced daily survival pressures.

"I can attend school every day because of the feeding program that helps me have energy to learn." (IDI3.3.1)

"I feel relieved when there are scholarships because my parents do not worry too much about expenses." (IDI3.3.2)

"I want better classrooms and materials so learning will not be very hard." (IDI3.3.3)

"I struggle to go to school when transportation is difficult, so support really helps us." (IDI3.3.4)

"I feel motivated when the school gives supplies because it helps my family." (IDI3.3.5)

This theme implied that educational equity for Obo Manuvu learners required systemic investment beyond classroom instruction. Policymakers and educational leaders must prioritize funding for infrastructure, nutrition, transportation, and financial aid in Indigenous communities. Without addressing these structural barriers, educational reforms risk placing the burden of success entirely on learners. Sustainable educational improvement necessitated coordinated economic and institutional support that reduced poverty-related obstacles.

This finding was supported by Badawi (2021), who identified poverty and infrastructure deficits as major barriers to Indigenous education in Mindanao. The results also corroborated World Bank (2024) and OECD (2024) reports emphasizing the role of financial assistance in improving Indigenous learners' access and retention. This interpretation also aligned with Cruz (2023) and Romero (2024), who documented how economic hardship contributes to dropout risk among Indigenous youth.

Community–School Partnerships

Community–school partnerships captured learners' emphasis on shared responsibility between schools, families, community elders, and external institutions in supporting education. Learners viewed elders, parents, and community leaders as essential partners in learning, capable of contributing

cultural knowledge, guidance, and advocacy. This theme reflected the communal orientation of Obo Manuvu learners, who perceived education as a collective endeavor rather than an isolated institutional process. Partnerships were seen as pathways to culturally aligned, sustainable educational support.

> *"I want our elders to help teach our culture in school because they know our traditions well." (IDI3.4.1)*
> *"I feel supported when my parents and teachers work together." (IDI3.4.2)*
> *"I think the community and school should help each other so learners can succeed." (IDI3.4.3)*
> *"I feel proud when our community is involved in school activities." (IDI3.4.4)*
> *"I want programs where our voices are heard and we can help plan for our future." (IDI3.4.5)*

The implications of this theme emphasized that sustainable educational reform must be participatory and community-driven. Schools serving Indigenous learners should institutionalize mechanisms for elder involvement, parent engagement, and youth leadership. Partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and local organizations can expand resources and opportunities. Recognizing community knowledge as legitimate educational capital strengthens trust, relevance, and long-term impact.

This interpretation was congruent with Ladaga (2022), who emphasized Indigenous community participation as essential to effective education policy implementation. The findings also aligned with Miole (2024) and Nakamura (2023), which highlighted the importance of community engagement in Indigenous education. This was further supported by Johnson and Martin (2023), who argued that equitable Indigenous education requires collaborative governance and shared accountability.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of Practical Insights for Improving Educational Support and Opportunities

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
Teaching and learning practices	Mother-tongue use; local stories; cultural lessons	"We learn better when our language is used." (IDI6); "Local stories help us	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	Learning improved when instruction reflected Indigenous language,

Issues Probed	Codes / Categories	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings / Interpretations
		understand." (IDI4)		culture, and knowledge systems.
School-based academic and emotional support	Tutoring; mentoring; flexible schedules	"Extra help after class helps me." (IDI11); "Flexible time helps us balance chores." (IDI4)	Holistic School-Based Support	Engagement increased when schools addressed academic, emotional, and contextual needs.
Economic and material assistance	Scholarships; feeding programs; transport	"Feeding programs help us attend school." (IDI9); "Scholarships help my family." (IDI2)	Financial and Structural Assistance	Structural and economic support reduced barriers to participation and persistence.
Community and institutional collaboration	Elders' involvement; partnerships; youth councils	"Elders should help teach culture." (IDI4); "Community and school should work together." (IDI13)	Community–School Partnerships	Sustainable support required shared responsibility between schools, families, and institutions.

Synthesis of the Results

The synthesis of findings from Tables 1 to 3 provided a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the lived experiences, educational dreams, and learner-informed insights of Obo Manuvu learners as they navigated their educational journey. Across the three sets of results, education was not experienced merely as an academic process but as a culturally embedded and socially negotiated pathway shaped by material constraints, linguistic and curricular tensions, relational support systems, and deeply rooted collective aspirations. This synthesis affirmed that the educational realities of Obo Manuvu learners were best understood through the interaction of lived experience, meaning-making, and proposed pathways for support, rather than through isolated variables.

Findings from Table 1 revealed that the lived experiences of Obo Manuvu learners were consistently shaped by structural and contextual challenges, including long and unsafe travel to school, limited learning resources, language barriers, and the need to balance schooling with family and cultural responsibilities. These conditions placed learners in situations where educational participation required continuous negotiation between academic demands and communal obligations. Similar patterns were documented in Indigenous education literature, where geographic isolation, poverty, and linguistic marginalization were identified as persistent barriers to schooling (Badawi, 2021; De Vera, 2021; Cruz, 2023). Despite these constraints, learners' persistence was sustained through relational support from parents, peers, culturally sensitive teachers, and school-based programs. This finding was congruent with Capuyan (2022) and Buenaflor (2023), who emphasized that Indigenous learners' resilience is largely relational and culturally anchored rather than purely individual.

Table 1 also highlighted that schooling functioned as a space of identity negotiation for Obo Manuvu learners. Learners experienced tension between their Indigenous identity and dominant school norms, particularly when instruction and curriculum failed to reflect their language and cultural knowledge. At the same time, moments of cultural recognition within school spaces fostered pride, belonging, and motivation. This finding aligned with the studies of Crisostomo (2021), Oquendo (2022), and Bautista (2022), which demonstrated that culturally incongruent schooling can weaken engagement, while culturally affirming practices strengthen Indigenous learners' sense of self and academic participation. International and local studies similarly underscored that Indigenous learners thrive when schools acknowledge and legitimize Indigenous identity as a source of knowledge and strength (Cameron, 2024; Garcia, 2024).

Building on these lived experiences, the findings in Table 2 illuminated how Obo Manuvu learners interpreted the meanings and significance of their educational dreams. Educational aspirations emerged as emotional anchors that sustained hope, motivation, and resilience amid adversity. Learners consistently framed their dreams as collective rather than individual pursuits, linking academic goals to family upliftment, cultural continuity, and future service to the community. This collective orientation echoed the findings of Gabriel and Gaite (2023) and Pelegrino (2023), who reported that Indigenous learners often conceptualize education as a means of fulfilling familial and communal responsibilities. Similarly, Arias (2023) and Dela Cruz (2023) found that Indigenous learners' values and motivations are deeply embedded in relational and cultural frameworks, shaping how they define success.

The results further showed that educational dreams were closely tied to identity formation and future-oriented leadership. Learners envisioned themselves as future teachers, health workers, and community leaders who could contribute to the well-being and development of their people. These aspirations reflected what Stewart (2024) described as "freedom dreaming" among Indigenous youth, where aspirations function as acts of resistance against marginalization and as

visions for collective transformation. This finding was also supported by Evans (2023) and Johnson and Martin (2023), who argued that Indigenous aspirations are often oriented toward sustaining community life and challenging inequitable systems rather than achieving individual mobility alone.

Table 3 synthesized learners' practical insights on how educational support and opportunities could be improved. Learners articulated a clear need for culturally responsive pedagogy that integrates Indigenous language, traditions, and local knowledge into teaching and learning processes. This finding corroborated the results of Añolga (2023), Flores (2022), and Garcia (2023), which demonstrated that culturally grounded instruction enhances relevance, comprehension, and learner engagement. It also aligned with international evidence showing that culturally responsive teaching improves Indigenous learners' confidence and academic participation (Lowe, 2024; da Silva, 2024; Zhang, 2023).

In addition, learners emphasized the importance of holistic school-based support that addressed not only academic needs but also emotional well-being, relational safety, and contextual realities. Supportive teachers, mentoring programs, flexible schedules, and safe learning environments were viewed as essential for sustaining engagement and persistence. These findings were consistent with Cameron (2024), Green and Lipton (2022), and Johnson (2023), who highlighted belonging, care, and relational trust as central to Indigenous student success. Learners also identified financial and structural assistance, such as scholarships, feeding programs, transportation support, and improved facilities, as critical enablers of participation. This echoed the conclusions of Badawi (2021), World Bank (2024), and OECD (2024), which underscored that poverty-related barriers must be addressed to achieve equitable educational outcomes for Indigenous learners.

Finally, Table 3 emphasized the centrality of community–school partnerships in sustaining educational success. Learners viewed education as a shared responsibility among schools, families, elders, and external institutions. The involvement of community elders, parents, and local leaders was seen as vital in ensuring cultural alignment, trust, and sustainability. This finding was strongly supported by Ladaga (2022), Miole (2024), and Nakamura (2023), who argued that Indigenous education initiatives are most effective when communities are active partners rather than passive beneficiaries.

Overall, the synthesis of Tables 1 to 3 demonstrated that the educational experiences, dreams, and insights of Obo Manuvu learners were deeply interconnected and culturally situated. Schooling was experienced as a negotiated journey shaped by hardship and support, while educational dreams functioned as sources of resilience and collective purpose. The findings collectively underscored that effective educational support for Obo Manuvu learners required moving beyond access toward culturally sustaining, relationally grounded, and structurally responsive systems. By centering learners' voices, the study reinforced the argument that Indigenous education must affirm identity,

address systemic inequities, and align educational structures with the lived realities and aspirations of Indigenous youth (Avel & Cansino, 2023; Hernandez, 2021; Johnson & Martin, 2023).

CHAPTER IV
IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter presented the implications and directions for future research drawn from the findings of the study on the lived experiences and educational dreams of Obo Manuvu learners. The discussion was situated within the broader context of Indigenous education, cultural responsiveness, and community–school partnerships, emphasizing the importance of understanding education from the perspectives of Indigenous learners themselves. The chapter highlighted the crucial roles of schools, educators, educational leaders, families, and community stakeholders in designing inclusive, culturally grounded, and sustainable educational practices that affirm Indigenous identity while addressing structural and socioeconomic barriers. It also underscored the need for continued scholarly inquiry that centers Indigenous voices across diverse contexts, particularly in resource-limited and marginalized communities, to inform future research, program development, and policy initiatives that promote equity, cultural continuity, and meaningful educational opportunities for Indigenous learners.

On the Lived Experiences of Obo Manuvu Learners in Navigating Their Educational Journey

The findings on the lived experiences of Obo Manuvu learners carry important implications for how educational systems understand Indigenous participation in schooling. The results showed that learners navigated education within conditions shaped by geographic isolation, material scarcity, language barriers, and competing family and cultural responsibilities. These realities suggest that educational access alone is insufficient if learning environments do not account for the daily constraints Indigenous learners face. Similar observations were documented by Badawi (2021) and De Vera (2021), who emphasized that structural inequalities in Mindanao continue to shape Indigenous learners' educational participation. Educational planning must therefore move beyond standardized assumptions and incorporate contextual analyses grounded in Indigenous realities.

The results further implied that persistence among Obo Manuvu learners was sustained largely through relational support systems rather than institutional mechanisms alone. Support from parents, teachers, peers, and community members functioned as protective factors that enabled learners to continue schooling despite hardship. This finding reinforced the argument of Capuyan (2022) and Buenaflor (2023) that resilience among Indigenous learners is relational and culturally embedded. Schools serving Indigenous populations must strengthen teacher preparation and school cultures that prioritize empathy, flexibility, and cultural sensitivity as core professional competencies.

Another important implication concerned identity negotiation within school spaces. Learners experienced schooling as a site where Indigenous identity was either affirmed or marginalized, depending on how culture and language were treated in instruction and school practices. When schools failed

to reflect Indigenous knowledge systems, learners experienced disengagement and cultural tension. This was consistent with the findings of Crisostomo (2021), Oquendo (2022), and Bautista (2022), which showed that culturally incongruent schooling weakens Indigenous learners' sense of belonging. Educational leaders must therefore institutionalize culturally affirming practices as part of mainstream schooling rather than treating them as supplemental activities.

In terms of future research, there is a need for longitudinal studies that follow Obo Manuvu learners across grade levels to understand how lived experiences evolve over time. Existing studies, including the present inquiry, capture experiences at specific moments but do not fully document how cumulative exposure to structural barriers or support systems shapes long-term educational trajectories. Gabriel and Gaite (2023) and Hernandez (2021) emphasized that Indigenous learners' educational experiences are dynamic and influenced by changing family, economic, and policy contexts, warranting sustained inquiry.

Future research should also expand comparative studies across Indigenous groups in Mindanao and other regions of the Philippines. While this study focused on Obo Manuvu learners, each Indigenous community possesses distinct cultural practices and educational challenges. Comparative qualitative research can help identify both shared patterns and community-specific realities, supporting more nuanced and equitable policy development. This direction aligns with the recommendations of Avel and Cansino (2023) and Norberte (2024), who called for context-sensitive research to inform Indigenous education reform.

On Learners' Interpretations of the Meanings and Significance of Their Educational Dreams

The findings regarding learners' interpretations of their educational dreams revealed that aspirations functioned as powerful emotional and motivational anchors rather than abstract goals. Learners framed their dreams as sources of hope, resilience, and purpose that sustained them amid hardship. This carries the implication that educational motivation among Indigenous learners is deeply affective and value-driven. Arias (2023) and Dela Cruz (2023) similarly found that Indigenous learners' motivation is shaped by personal values and emotional meaning rather than external rewards alone. Educational interventions should therefore nurture aspiration formation as part of learner development.

Another significant implication was that learners conceptualized educational dreams as collective rather than individual achievements. Aspirations were closely tied to family upliftment, cultural continuity, and service to the community. This collective orientation challenged dominant meritocratic narratives that frame success as individual mobility. The findings corroborated Gabriel and Gaite (2023) and Pelegrino (2023), who documented that Indigenous learners often view education as a moral responsibility to family and community. Educational success indicators must therefore be reexamined to account for collective and relational outcomes.

The results also implied that educational dreams were central to identity formation. Learners' aspirations were not separate from who they were but were

deeply intertwined with cultural heritage, family narratives, and future roles within the community. This finding aligned with Bautista (2022) and Garcia (2024), who emphasized that Indigenous learners' aspirations are identity-affirming processes. Schools that ignore this connection risk undermining learners' self-concept and long-term engagement.

In terms of future research, there is a need to explore how educational dreams are shaped across different stages of schooling. Future studies may examine how aspirations evolve from elementary to secondary and tertiary levels, particularly in response to increased academic demands and exposure to dominant cultural norms. Stewart (2024) and Johnson and Martin (2023) suggested that Indigenous aspirations are continuously negotiated within unequal systems, making them critical sites for longitudinal analysis.

Further research should also examine the role of family narratives and intergenerational experiences in shaping learners' dreams. While the present study captured learners' perspectives, future inquiries may include parents and elders to understand how aspirations are transmitted, reinforced, or constrained across generations. Such approaches align with Hernandez (2021) and Flores (2022), who emphasized the importance of intergenerational perspectives in Indigenous education research.

On the Practical Insights for Improving Educational Support and Opportunities

The practical insights articulated by Obo Manuvu learners highlighted the need for culturally responsive pedagogy as a foundation for meaningful learning. Learners consistently emphasized that instruction became more effective when it incorporated Indigenous language, stories, and local knowledge. This implication reinforced the argument that cultural relevance is not supplementary but central to learning. Añolga (2023), Flores (2022), and Garcia (2023) similarly demonstrated that culturally grounded pedagogy improves comprehension, engagement, and learner confidence.

Another implication concerned the importance of holistic school-based support. Learners identified emotional safety, mentoring, peer support, and flexible school policies as essential for sustaining engagement. This finding suggested that academic success cannot be separated from learners' emotional and social realities. Cameron (2024) and Green and Lipton (2022) emphasized that a sense of belonging is a key predictor of Indigenous learner persistence. Schools must therefore adopt whole-child and culturally sensitive support systems.

The results also underscored the necessity of financial and structural assistance. Scholarships, feeding programs, transportation support, and adequate facilities were viewed by learners as prerequisites for participation rather than optional benefits. This implication aligned with Badawi (2021), World Bank (2024), and OECD (2024), which highlighted poverty as a major determinant of Indigenous educational outcomes. Without addressing material conditions, educational reforms risk reproducing inequities.

Community–school partnerships emerged as another critical implication. Learners viewed education as a shared responsibility involving elders, parents,

schools, and institutions. This communal framing challenged top-down educational models and emphasized participatory governance. Ladaga (2022), Miole (2024), and Nakamura (2023) supported this finding by showing that Indigenous education initiatives are more sustainable when communities are active partners.

Future research should examine the implementation and effectiveness of culturally responsive and community-driven educational programs. Experimental and evaluative studies may assess how specific interventions influence attendance, engagement, and identity affirmation among Indigenous learners. Such research directions respond to the calls of Lopez (2023), da Silva (2024), and Zhang (2023) for evidence-based Indigenous curriculum reform.

Overall Implications and Directions for Future Research

Overall, the implications of this study highlighted that the education of Obo Manuvu learners must be understood as a culturally situated, relational, and structurally constrained process. The findings underscored that lived experiences, educational dreams, and learner-generated insights were deeply interconnected and collectively oriented. These results reinforced the arguments of Avel and Cansino (2023) and Hernandez (2021) that Indigenous education must move beyond access toward equity, cultural affirmation, and systemic responsiveness.

The study also demonstrated the value of centering Indigenous learners' voices in educational research and policy development. Learners were not passive recipients of education but active meaning-makers capable of articulating both challenges and solutions. This aligned with Johnson and Martin (2023) and Evans (2023), who argued that Indigenous voices are essential for dismantling institutional inequities.

Directions for future research include longitudinal, comparative, and participatory studies that deepen understanding of Indigenous learners' educational trajectories across contexts. Mixed-methods and community-based research designs may further strengthen policy relevance and cultural validity. Continued scholarly inquiry grounded in Indigenous perspectives is essential for developing educational systems that are inclusive, empowering, and responsive to the aspirations and lived realities of Indigenous learners.

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