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Residents' Perceptions: Benefits and Concerns of the Proposed Eco-Tourism Development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond

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tourism, residents' perception, descriptive correlational survey, eco-tourism development, Bohol, Philippines

Abstract. Tourism continues to play a vital role in advancing economic growth and strengthening cultural identity, with eco-tourism emerging as a sustainable approach that balances livelihood opportunities with environmental protection. In Candijay, Bohol, the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond seeks to integrate aquaculture and tourism, making it essential to understand how residents perceive its potential benefits and concerns. The primary objective of this study was to assess the perceptions of residents in Barangay Cogtong regarding the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of the project, while also identifying their apprehensions about possible risks that may affect their community. To achieve this, the researchers employed a descriptive correlational survey design, administering a structured questionnaire to 50 residents living near the fishpond. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, and chi-square tests of independence to determine patterns of response and the influence of socio-demographic variables on perceptions. The findings revealed that residents strongly recognized the benefits of eco-tourism, particularly in creating jobs, diversifying livelihoods, improving infrastructure, raising environmental awareness, and preserving cultural identity, resulting in an overall composite mean of 3.61. Alongside these positive views, residents also voiced concerns about pollution, improper waste management, livelihood displacement, and the possibility of social conflicts emerging in the community. Statistical analysis further indicated that no significant relationship existed between most socio-demographic variables and perceptions, except for the length of residency, which significantly influenced how residents viewed the project. The study concludes that while residents support the proposed eco-tourism development, they emphasize the need for inclusive planning, sustainable practices, and active community participation to ensure lasting benefits and reduce environmental and social risks.

Introduction

Tourism significantly contributes to global economic growth, with eco-tourism emerging as a sustainable development approach that harmonizes economic gains with environmental protection (Fennell, 2020). The proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond aligns with global sustainability efforts, making it essential to assess local residents' perceptions to ensure an inclusive and beneficial outcome.

In Scotland, the fish farming company Mowi has initiated plans to develop Sanda Island into a combined salmon farming operation and tourist destination. This project includes refurbishing existing structures to accommodate tourists and establishing yacht moorings, aiming to create 14 new jobs. Mowi emphasizes community consultation and environmental impact assessments to ensure the project's sustainability and alignment with local interests (Das et al., 2023).

Similarly, in South Sumatra, Indonesia, the Sungsang Mangrove Restoration and Ecotourism (SMART) project exemplifies the integration of aquaculture and tourism. This initiative focuses on mangrove restoration and the development of eco-tourism activities, enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable practices. Collaborative efforts among local communities, research institutions, and international organizations have led to increased tourism revenue and environmental conservation awareness (Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry, 2024).

In the Philippines, the Department of Tourism (2022) recognizes eco-tourism as a vital component of the country's sustainable tourism strategy. Destinations such as Palawan and Bohol have gained popularity due to their environmental and economic contributions. However, challenges such as regulatory inconsistencies and the displacement of traditional livelihoods remain prevalent (Garcia et al., 2019). Coastal tourism studies indicate that local fisherfolk often face restrictions due to marine-protected area regulations associated with eco-tourism initiatives (Reyes & Dela Cruz, 2020). These concerns highlight the importance of community involvement in eco-tourism planning and execution to prevent economic displacement and ensure sustainable benefits for all stakeholders.

Candijay, Bohol, is known for its rich aquatic resources, particularly its fishponds and mangrove forests, which provide both economic and ecological benefits (Candijay Municipal Tourism Office, 2021). The proposed eco-tourism development at the BISU-Candijay Fishpond seeks to integrate sustainable tourism practices with aquaculture. Potential benefits include increased tourism revenue, conservation awareness, and livelihood diversification. However, potential issues such as land-use conflicts, disruptions to local fishing activities, and waste management require careful planning (Schelhas et al., 2019).

Given these factors, understanding the perceptions of Candijay residents is crucial to ensuring that the project aligns with their needs and expectations. Existing literature on eco-tourism primarily focuses on forest and coastal eco-tourism, with limited research examining the integration of aquaculture and tourism (Buckley, 2020). This research fills this gap by providing insights into fishpond-based eco-tourism in a rural Philippine setting,
contributing to policies and strategies for sustainable tourism development.

By examining residents' perceptions, the findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers, local government units, and tourism developers to design eco-tourism projects that balance environmental conservation, economic development, and social equity. Understanding the perceptions of local residents is crucial, as their support or opposition can significantly influence the project's success (Andereck & Vogt, 2020). Positive perceptions often stem from anticipated economic benefits, such as job creation and increased income from tourism-related activities (The International Ecotourism Society, 2022). Conversely, concerns may arise regarding land use conflicts, loss of traditional livelihoods, and the environmental impact of increased tourist activity (Buckley, 2021).

From these perspectives, the researchers were inspired to conduct this study to explore the potential benefits and concerns of the proposed eco-tourism development in BISU-Candijay Fishpond. The study aims to determine how residents perceive the initiative in terms of economic opportunities, environmental impacts, and socio-cultural implications. The findings will be instrumental in shaping strategies for the sustainable implementation and development of eco-tourism in Candijay. Additionally, this research will provide recommendations on addressing community apprehensions and maximizing the positive outcomes of the project while preserving the ecological integrity of the fishpond, ensuring a harmonious balance between progress and environmental conservation.

This study aims to assess the perceptions of residents regarding the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond in Cogtong, Candijay, Bohol, in 2025, focusing on its potential benefits and concerns. The findings will serve as a basis for informed decision-making in the sustainable development of eco-tourism in the area. Specifically, it sought to:

1. assess the socio-demographic profiles of the residents in terms of:
    1.1. age;
    1.2. sex;
    1.3. educational attainment;
    1.4 civil status;
    1.5 occupation; and
    1.6 length of residency in the area.

2. identify the perceived benefits of the proposed eco-tourism development in terms of:
    2.1 environmental impact;
    2.2 economic impact; and
    2.3 socio-cultural impact.

3. determine the concerns of residents regarding the proposed eco-tourism development in terms of:
    3.1 environmental risks;
    3.2 economic challenges; and
    3.3 social issues.

4. evaluate the significant relationship between residents' socio-demographic profiles and their perceptions of the benefits and concerns of the eco-tourism project.

5. formulate strategies that can be recommended to address residents' concerns while maximizing the benefits of the proposed eco-tourism development.

Methodology

This section outlines the research design, environment, respondents, instruments, and statistical tools used in the study. It presents the systematic approach employed to collect and analyze data regarding residents' perceptions, benefits, and concerns about the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond. The chosen methods ensure the reliability and validity of the findings to support the study's objectives.

Research Design

This study will employ a descriptive correlational survey research design. The researchers will utilize a quantitative approach to analyze the relationship between residents' perceptions, benefits, and concerns regarding the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond. A structured survey questionnaire will be used to gather data from the respondents. This design is appropriate as it will allow the researchers to describe and analyze patterns in residents' attitudes while determining whether there is a correlation between their perceptions and the identified variables, such as economic opportunities, environmental impacts, and sociocultural changes.

Research Environment

The research will be conducted in Barangay Cogtong, Candijay, Bohol, where the BISU-Candijay Fishpond is located. This area is known for its rich aquatic resources and serves as an essential site for aquaculture research, environmental conservation, and potential eco-tourism development. The fishpond and its surrounding community are directly affected by the proposed project, making it an ideal setting for assessing residents' perceptions. The study will consider the environmental, economic, and social factors influencing the feasibility and sustainability of eco-tourism in the area.

Research Respondents

The study will focus on residents of Barangay Cogtong, Candijay, Bohol, particularly those living near the BISU-Candijay Fishpond. To ensure a fair and unbiased selection of respondents, the researchers will employ a systematic random sampling. This method involves selecting respondents at regular intervals from a predefined list of eligible community members. By doing so the study ensures that every resident has an equal and structured opportunity to participate leading to a more representative sample of the local population.

Research Instrument

The researchers will use a modified standardized questionnaire based on the studies of Diedrich & García-Buades (2009), Local Perceptions of Tourism Impacts in a Marine Protected Area; Scheyvens (1999), Ecotourism and the Empowerment of Local Communities; and Honey (2008), Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise. These sources provide a foundation for understanding community perceptions of eco-tourism development. The questionnaire consists of three parts: Part 1 Socio-Demographic Profile – collects respondents' age, sex, civil status, education, occupation, and length of residency. Part 2 Perceived Benefits – assesses the expected environmental, economic, and socio-cultural benefits of the eco-tourism project. Part 3 Concerns – evaluates environmental risks, economic challenges, and social issues.

Statistical Treatment

The statistical formula that will be used in this study includes frequency count and percentage to assess and evaluate the respondents' age, sex, civil status, occupation, and duration of community residency. A weighted mean will be used to analyze and interpret the respondents' perceptions regarding the benefits and concerns of the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond. The Likert scale responses will be assigned numerical values to compute the overall perception scores. To determine if there is a significant relationship between the respondents' socio-demographic profiles and their perceptions of the benefits and concerns of the eco-tourism project, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

will be utilized. This statistical test will help identify significant differences in perceptions across various demographic groups, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the study's findings.

Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the residents' assessments regarding the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond are presented and interpreted, along with their implications.

There are three (3) parts presented in this chapter. The first part presents the respondents' profiles regarding their age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and length of residency. The second part involves residents' perceptions of the benefits of the proposed eco-tourism development, including environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts. The third part highlights residents' concerns, focusing on environmental risks, economic challenges, and social issues. The data are presented in the following tables below.

Demographic Profile

This section presents the respondents' profiles, including age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and length of residency. The respondents' demographic profile plays a vital role in understanding their perceptions of the proposed eco-tourism development. It provides essential context on how different social groups may respond to the project and how factors such as age, gender, and livelihood may shape their expectations and concerns. The comprehensive data is presented in Table 1.

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-25 yrs. Old	14	28
26-35 yrs. Old	10	20
36-45 yrs. Old	11	22
46-55 yrs. Old	10	20
56 above	5	10
Sex		
Male	25	50
Female	25	50
Educational Attainment		
Elementary Level	2	4
Elementary Graduate	7	14
High School Level	6	12
High School Graduate	18	36
College Level	11	22
College Graduate	6	12
Civil Status		
Single	22	44
Married	28	56
Occupation		
Student	8	16
Fisherfolk	13	26
Government Employee	3	6
Private Sector	6	12
Self Employed	2	4
Unemployed	10	20
Retired	1	2
Vendors	7	14
Length of Residency		
Less than 1 year	1	2
1-5 years	3	6
6-10 years	5	10
11-20 years	16	32
More than 20	25	50

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents (n=50)

The table above presents the respondents' demographic profile in terms of age. Most respondents were aged 18–25 (28%), followed by those aged 36–45 (22%), while the 26–35 and 46–55 groups each comprised 20%. Only 10% were 56 years old and above, making them the smallest group. This shows that most residents are young to middle-aged and in their productive years, making them more open to opportunities such as eco-tourism. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2022) also reports that the country's largest population share falls within the working-age group, which supports this finding. Previous studies also suggest that younger residents tend to focus on employment and income, while older residents often value cultural preservation and environmental protection (Jiang et al., 2023a; Kunjuraman et al., 2022a).

Regarding sex, the data show that 50% of respondents were male and 50% were female, reflecting an equal distribution of participants. This suggests that both men and women had equal opportunities to share their views on the proposed eco-tourism development, making the results more balanced and representative. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2022) also reports that the national population is nearly balanced, with 50.5% male and 49.5% female, supporting this study's findings. Research further notes that gender can influence community perspectives on tourism projects, as women often emphasize social and environmental considerations, while men tend to highlight economic and livelihood opportunities (Jiang et al., 2023b; Kunjuraman et al., 2022b).

Regarding educational attainment, most respondents were high school graduates (36%), followed by those who reached the college level (22%). Smaller shares completed elementary education (14%), were college graduates (12%), or had some high school but did not finish (12%), while only a few were at the elementary level (4%), and none pursued postgraduate studies. This shows that most residents attained basic to secondary education, with some exposure to tertiary education. A study of residents in Danao City, Cebu, found that educational background was associated with differences in residents' awareness and support of tourism's socioeconomic benefits, such as employment opportunities, local business gains, and community contributions, indicating that those with more schooling tended to recognize these advantages better (Giango et al., 2022). Likewise, higher education has been linked to greater awareness of ecotourism and more positive attitudes toward tourism development (Fabillar et al., 2025a).

Regarding civil status, most respondents near the BISU-Candijay fishpond were married (56%), while 44% were single. This shows that more than half of the residents have family responsibilities, which may influence how they perceive the benefits and risks of eco-tourism. Married individuals often prioritize livelihood stability and household welfare, while single respondents may be more open to flexible opportunities. Research in Bohol found that family-oriented communities tend to approach tourism development cautiously, considering its effects on household income and the environment (Castañeda et al., 2022). Similarly, there is limited evidence that marital status significantly affects community participation, though some studies suggest it may influence how individuals prioritize the benefits and risks of tourism (Cabaguing, 2024).

In terms of occupation, most respondents near the BISU-Candijay fishpond were fisherfolk (26%), followed by the unemployed (20%), students (16%), and vendors (14%), with smaller proportions working in the private sector (12%), government (6%), self-employed (4%), and retired (2%). This pattern confirms that fishing remains the primary livelihood in coastal communities like Cogtong and Candijay, while small-scale trading (vending) provides vital complementary income. Fisherfolk often diversify their livelihoods: for example, many small-scale fishermen in Tacloban City adopted adaptive strategies such as part-time jobs, alternative fisheries, and occasional agriculture to cope with unstable fishing income during the COVID-19 pandemic (Siguan, 2022). In other communities, households acknowledge tourism and small retail or vending as alternatives, especially where fisheries overlap with tourism zones or when environmental pressures limit fish catches (Roscher et al., 2022). Finally, sustainable fisheries management studies in the Philippines show both the constraints fisherfolk face and their adaptive strategies, including combining fishing with other occupations to ensure livelihood security (Tolentino-Zondervan et al., 2022).

In terms of length of residency, half of the respondents near the BISU-Candijay fishpond had lived in the area for more than 20 years (50%), followed by those who stayed for 11–20 years (32%). Smaller groups included those residing for 6–10 years (10%), 1–5 years (6%), and less than one year (2%). This indicates that most respondents are long-term residents with strong social and cultural ties to the community. Long-term coastal or rural residents are often cautious about tourism, valuing their traditional livelihoods and natural resources (Asmoro, 2025). Similarly, more extended residency builds stronger place attachment, shaping how people support development while caring for sustainability (Constantino et al., 2023).

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
I.	**Environmental Impact**		
	The eco-tourism project will promote the conservation of the natural resources and biodiversity.	3.74	Strongly Agree
	Visitors will be educated on sustainable practices and environmental protection.	3.66	Strongly Agree

Strict policies and regulations will be implemented to reduce pollution from tourism activities.	3.66	Strongly Agree
Co-tourism will promote the responsible use of natural resources, such as water and energy.	3.64	Strongly Agree
Eco-tourism activities will encourage responsible waste management and recycling initiatives.	3.62	Strongly Agree
The project will implement measures to prevent habitat destruction and protect wildlife.	3.62	Strongly Agree
The project will integrate renewable energy sources (e.g., solar power, wind energy) in its operation	3.60	Strongly Agree
Ecotourism will encourage responsible tourism behavior, reducing the negative footprint on nature.	3.58	Strongly Agree
The project will include eco-friendly infrastructure that minimizes environmental damage.	3.48	Strongly Agree
The development will help in reforestation and the protection of endangered species.	3.46	Strongly Agree
Sub-Composite Mean	**3.60**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: *Strongly Agree (SA) 3.26-4.00; Agree (A) 2.51- 3.25; Disagree (D) 1.76- 2.50; Strongly Disagree (SD) 1.00- 1.75*

Table 2.1. Perceived Benefits of the Proposed Eco-Tourism Development in Terms of Environmental Impact (N=50)

This section presents data on residents' perceptions of the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural benefits of the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond.

Table 2.1 presents residents' responses on eco-tourism's potential to contribute to environmental conservation and sustainability.
The sub-composite mean of 3.60 reflects respondents' overall sentiment toward the project's environmental impact. This score indicates strong agreement that eco-tourism can yield positive outcomes, particularly in conserving resources and promoting responsible practices. Respondents believe it can protect biodiversity, encourage eco-friendly activities, and minimize harm to the fishpond ecosystem. These findings are consistent with studies showing that residents in the Philippines support eco-tourism when it sustains ecological balance and raises conservation awareness (Fabillar et al., 2025b). Similar results were reported in Zamboanga City, where community-based ecotourism programs strengthened environmental stewardship and reduced pressure on fisheries (Bernardo et al., 2024a).

The highest weighted mean of 3.74 is associated with the perception that eco-tourism will promote the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity. This result indicates that respondents are highly optimistic about the project's potential to protect the environment. It also reflects a strong belief that eco-tourism can safeguard ecosystems, such as mangroves and aquatic habitats, which are essential to both livelihoods and ecological stability. Comparable studies in Samar found that greater awareness of ecotourism was associated with more substantial support for biodiversity protection (Fabillar et al., 2025c). Research in the Visayas likewise found that sustainable tourism development encouraged community-linked livelihood initiatives and reduced environmentally destructive practices (Fernandez-Abila et al., 2024a).

The lowest weighted mean of 3.46 pertains to the belief that the development will help in reforestation and the protection of endangered species. Although this score is slightly lower than the others, it still indicates strong agreement among respondents. The result suggests that while residents are confident in eco-tourism's conservation benefits, they are more cautious about long-term initiatives such as reforestation and species protection, which require continuous effort and collaboration. Studies in the Philippines emphasize that ecotourism projects succeed in biodiversity-rich areas only when combined with formal conservation mechanisms and multi-stakeholder partnerships (Bernardo et al., 2024b). Recent research also highlights that government–community collaboration is crucial in ensuring that ecotourism contributes to long-term ecological resilience. Furthermore, continuous environmental monitoring and effective management plans are essential to prevent potential degradation of natural habitats as tourist activity increases. Establishing clear guidelines for visitor management, waste disposal, and habitat restoration can significantly enhance the sustainability of eco-tourism initiatives (Brun et al., 2024).

	Indicators	**Weighted Mean**	**Description**
II.	**Economic Impact**		
1.	The proposed eco-tourism development will create new job opportunities for residents.	3.68	Strongly Agree

2.	The project will boost income generation for local businesses and entrepreneurs.	3.68	Strongly Agree
3.	The development will improve infrastructure (e.g., roads, utilities, and accommodation), benefiting both tourists and locals.	3.68	Strongly Agree
4.	Eco-tourism will increase government revenue through taxes and tourism-related fees.	3.64	Strongly Agree
5.	Local farmers, artisans, and suppliers will have increased opportunities to sell their products and services.	3.62	Strongly Agree
6.	The development will help attract more investment to improve the local economy.	3.62	Strongly Agree
7.	The project will help reduce poverty by providing alternative livelihoods.	3.58	Strongly Agree
8.	The eco-tourism project will encourage partnership between local businesses and tourism investors.	3.58	Strongly Agree
9.	Eco-tourism will encourage sustainable business investments in the community.	3.54	Strongly Agree
10.	The increased influx of tourists will enhance economic stability in the region.	3.52	Strongly Agree
	Sub-Composite Mean	**3.61**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: *Strongly Agree (SA) 3.26-4.00; Agree (A) 2.51- 3.25; Disagree (D) 1.76- 2.50; Strongly Disagree (SD) 1.00- 1.75*

Table 2.2. Perceived Benefits of the Proposed Eco-Tourism Development in Terms of Economic Impact (N=50)

Table 2.2 presents residents' responses on eco-tourism's potential to generate income, create employment, and strengthen the local economy. The sub-composite mean of 3.61 reflects respondents' overall sentiment toward the project's economic impact. This score suggests strong agreement that eco-tourism will provide substantial economic benefits to the community. Respondents believe it will create jobs, improve business opportunities, and support economic stability in the region. Similar findings showed that eco-tourism initiatives in Samar provided locals with diversified income and increased participation in local economic activities (Fabillar et al., 2025d). Eco-tourism initiatives in small islands of the Visayas were also found to generate higher incomes and improve livelihood options for residents through sustainable tourism development (Fernandez-Abila et al., 2024b).

This shows that eco-tourism's benefits go beyond employment, extending to small industries that serve tourists. At the BISU-Candijay Fishpond, the project could boost local entrepreneurship by inspiring residents to start small ventures, such as food stalls, tour guiding, and souvenir-making. The high perception scores also reflect residents' confidence in eco-tourism's potential to strengthen the local economy. These findings highlight the need for financial training and business support to enable residents to benefit from tourism-related opportunities fully.

Three indicators share the highest weighted mean of 3.68: the creation of new job opportunities for residents, the boost in income generation for local businesses and entrepreneurs, and the improvement of infrastructure that benefits both tourists and locals. This result shows that respondents are most optimistic about eco-tourism's ability to stimulate employment, entrepreneurship, and infrastructure development. Jobs and livelihood diversification are especially important in rural areas like Candijay, where eco-tourism can supplement fishing and farming as primary sources of income. Studies in Zamboanga City emphasize that institutional arrangements and community involvement are crucial for ensuring ecotourism programs deliver economic benefits and local business growth (Bernardo et al., 2024c). Another study in Samar noted that improving local attitudes (through KAP) correlated with stronger participation in tourism-driven businesses (Fabillar et al., 2025e).

The lowest weighted mean of 3.52 indicates that increased tourism will enhance economic stability in the region. While still within the "Strongly Agree" category, this relatively lower score suggests that residents are cautious about the long-term consistency of tourism-driven income and its ability to stabilize the local economy. This concern reflects the possibility that tourism inflows may fluctuate due to seasonality, environmental risks, or global economic challenges. Research in Zamboanga City warns that economic benefits may not be sustained without robust governance structures (Bernardo et al., 2024d). Studies from Samar further noted that although communities recognize the potential for economic resilience through eco-tourism, actual stability depends heavily on continual community engagement (Fabillar et al., 2025f).

	Indicators	**Weighted Mean**	**Description**
III.	**Socio-Cultural Impact**		
1.	Traditional arts, crafts, and performances will be preserved and promoted through tourism activities.	3.84	Strongly Agree

2.	The eco-tourism project will promote cultural heritage and traditions among locals and tourists.	3.72	Strongly Agree
3.	Eco-tourism will strengthen community cohesion and cooperation.	3.68	Strongly Agree
4.	Eco-tourism will foster a sense of pride and identity among residents.	3.66	Strongly Agree
5.	The development will enhance intercultural exchange between visitors and the local community.	3.60	Strongly Agree
6.	The development will raise awareness among tourists of indigenous practices and local history.	3.60	Strongly Agree
7.	The eco-tourism project will help preserve and pass on traditional farming and fishing practices.	3.60	Strongly Agree
8.	Local communities will have more opportunities to showcase their customs and festivals to visitors.	3.52	Strongly Agree
9.	The project will create opportunities for local knowledge-sharing and storytelling.	3.48	Strongly Agree
10.	The project will encourage community participation in tourism planning and decision-making.	3.44	Strongly Agree
	Sub-Composite Mean	**3.61**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: *Strongly Agree (SA) 3.26-4.00; Agree (A) 2.51- 3.25; Disagree (D) 1.76- 2.50; Strongly Disagree (SD) 1.00- 1.75*

Table 2.3. Perceive Benefits of the Proposed Eco-tourism Development in Terms of Socio-Cultural Impact (N = 50)

Table 2.3 presents residents' responses on eco-tourism's potential to strengthen cultural identity, preserve traditions, and promote community cohesion. The sub-composite mean of 3.61, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," reflects the overall sentiment of the respondents toward the project's socio-cultural impact. This indicates that residents strongly believe eco-tourism can bring cultural and social benefits, particularly in preserving traditions, fostering pride, and encouraging greater community involvement. They also see eco-tourism as an avenue to showcase indigenous practices and encourage intercultural exchange between locals and visitors. These results align with previous studies showing that tourism in the Philippines offers opportunities for cultural preservation and community development when properly managed (Damayon et al., 2025). Findings in Southern Iloilo also revealed that coastal tourism stakeholders demonstrated high awareness and adherence to sustainable tourism practices, which contribute to social cohesion and cultural identity (Hernandez et al., 2022).

The highest weighted mean of 3.84 corresponds to the perception that eco-tourism will preserve and promote traditional arts, crafts, and performances through tourism activities. This result suggests that residents are most optimistic about eco-tourism as a tool for protecting and celebrating their cultural heritage. Tourism activities are seen as platforms to sustain local craftsmanship, traditional performances, and cultural expressions that might otherwise decline. This finding is consistent with research in Iloilo, which shows that socio-cultural, environmental, and economic factors associated with sustainable coastal tourism contribute to regenerative practices and heritage preservation (Libe-Torres et al., 2024a). Similarly, a study on Ugong Rock Adventures in Palawan revealed that community-based tourism strengthens social capital and encourages local participation, enabling residents to preserve cultural traditions while benefiting from tourism development (Delas Alas et al., 2020).

The lowest weighted mean of 3.44 pertains to the belief that the project will encourage community participation in tourism planning and decision-making. Although this is the lowest among the indicators, it still falls within the "Strongly Agree" range, indicating that residents recognize the potential for community involvement but remain cautious about the extent of their influence in decision-making. This cautiousness is echoed by findings that community-based tourism in Baseco showed strong support for participation in planning when locals perceived genuine ownership and communication (De Leon et al., 2024a).

Indicators	Sub-Composite Mean	Description
Economic Impact	3.61	Strongly Agree
Socio-Cultural Impact	3.61	Strongly Agree
Environmental Impact	3.60	Strongly Agree
Composite mean	**3.61**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: *Strongly Agree (SA) 3.26-4.00; Agree (A) 2.51- 3.25; Disagree (D) 1.76- 2.50; Strongly Disagree (SD) 1.00- 1.75*

Table 3. Summary on the Perceived Benefits of the Proposed Eco-Tourism Development in the BISU- Candijay Fishpond (n=50)

Table 3 presents the perceived benefits of the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond. The sub-composite means for the three dimensions are: economic impact (3.61), socio-cultural impact (3.61), and environmental impact (3.60). The overall composite mean is 3.61, which falls within the "strongly agree" range, showing that residents have a very positive perception of the project's potential benefits. Among the three, the lowest sub-composite mean is environmental impact (3.60). However, it still reflects strong agreement, indicating that while respondents believe in its positive effects, this area may require more careful implementation to meet expectations fully.

The strong rating for the economic impact (3.61) reflects residents' belief that eco-tourism will enhance income opportunities, stimulate local businesses, and generate new jobs. Similar findings were reported in Samar, where ecotourism initiatives provided locals with diversified income and greater participation in local economic activities (Fabillar et al., 2024e). Research on small island communities in the Visayas also found that sustainable tourism development improved livelihood opportunities and supported economic resilience (Fernandez-Abila et al., 2024c). This indicates that the people of Candijay view the project as a promising avenue for financial stability and local development.

The socio-cultural impact, with a sub-composite mean of 3.61, emphasizes the role of eco-tourism in preserving traditions, fostering cultural pride, and strengthening social cohesion. A recent study showed that ecotourism helps safeguard cultural identity by encouraging pride in indigenous practices and promoting cultural exchange (Preserving Cultural Traditions among Ifugao Migrants, 2025). Likewise, community-based tourism in Zamboanga City demonstrated that sustainable management fosters both social unity and the preservation of cultural heritage (Bernardo et al., 2024). These insights support the residents' optimism that the proposed development will strengthen both cultural preservation and social relationships in Candijay.

The environmental impact, with a mean score of 3.60, demonstrates that respondents believe eco-tourism will help conserve biodiversity and encourage sustainable practices. Ecotourism projects in Samar highlighted that greater awareness of tourism's role in conservation improved residents' support for protecting marine and coastal resources (Fabillar et al., 2024f). Similarly, studies in Iloilo have emphasized that sustainable, regenerative coastal tourism fosters biodiversity protection and reduces ecological degradation (Libe-Torres et al., 2024). This suggests that the community anticipates that the proposed project will not only generate economic and cultural benefits but also ensure environmental stewardship for future generations.

Overall, the high composite mean of 3.61 indicates strong community confidence in the proposed eco-tourism project. The strong consistency of agreement across all indicators indicates that the perceived benefits are holistic, spanning economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects. However, the long-term success of eco-tourism depends on effective planning, equitable participation, and sustainable management practices. Recent studies stress that inclusive governance and adaptive management are critical to preventing over-commercialization and ensuring ecological resilience (Brun et al., 2024b). Therefore, continuous collaboration between the local community, government, and stakeholders is essential to maintain trust, promote shared responsibility, and ensure that the project's benefits are sustained for future generations.

I.	Indicators Environmental Risk	Weighted Mean	Description
	Increased tourist activities could contribute to waste and pollution in the area.	3.32	Very Concerned
2.	Eco-tourism activities may not be properly regulated, leading to long-term environmental damage.	3.32	Very Concerned
3.	The community lacks a proper waste management system to handle increased tourist waste.	3.32	Very Concerned
4.	The development might disturb local wildlife and threaten biodiversity.	3.30	Very Concerned
5.	The eco-tourism project may lead to deforestation and habitat destruction. The eco-tourism project may lead to deforestation and habitat destruction.	3.26	Very Concerned
6.	The project could lead to overcrowding, negatively impacting the natural landscape.	3.26	Very Concerned
7.	Noise and air pollution from increased transportation could harm the local ecosystem.	3.26	Very Concerned
8.	The development may alter natural water flow patterns, increasing the risk of flooding in nearby areas.	3.22	Moderately Concerned
9.	The use of natural resources (e.g., water, energy) for tourism purposes may affect local supply.	3.16	Moderately Concerned

10.	Construction activities may lead to soil erosion and damage to coastal or wetland areas.	3.08	Moderately Concerned
	Sub-Composite Mean	**3.25**	**Moderately Concerned**

Legend: *Very Concerned (VC) 3.26-4.00; Moderately Concerned (MC) 2.51- 3.25; Slightly Concerned (SC) 1.76- 2.50; Not Concerned (NC) 1.00- 1.75*

Table 4.1. Concerns About the Proposed Eco-tourism Development in Terms of Environmental Risk (N=50)

This part presents data on residents' perceptions of environmental risks, economic challenges, and environmental issues associated with the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond.

Table 4.1 presents residents' responses regarding their level of concern about the potential negative environmental impacts of eco-tourism. The sub-composite mean of 3.25, interpreted as "Moderately Concerned," reflects the overall sentiment of respondents toward the project's potential environmental risks. This score suggests that residents recognize potential threats, such as waste generation, pollution, and habitat disturbance, but see these risks as manageable if appropriate safeguards are in place. Similar patterns of moderate concern have been reported in recent studies, in which communities acknowledge both the benefits and the environmental risks of tourism. For instance, a study in Samar noted that residents supported ecotourism but expressed caution regarding ecological impacts when management plans were unclear (Fabillar et al., 2025g). Waste and pollution are also familiar sources of community concern in ecotourism areas, notably when proper waste management systems and environmental regulations are lacking (Bernardo et al., 2024).

The highest weighted mean of 3.32 is shared by three indicators: concerns that increased tourist activities could contribute to waste and pollution; that eco-tourism activities may not be properly regulated, leading to long-term environmental damage; and that the community lacks a proper waste management system to handle increased tourist waste. These results highlight that waste disposal and regulatory enforcement are considered the most pressing risks by residents. Similar findings were reported in Zamboanga City, where institutional weaknesses in waste management heightened concerns about pollution at ecotourism sites (Bernardo et al., 2024f). Likewise, studies in Manila showed that without strict environmental safeguards, community-based tourism projects posed serious risks of improper waste disposal and biodiversity loss (De Leon et al., 2024b).

The lowest weighted mean of 3.08 reflects concern that construction activities may lead to soil erosion and damage to coastal or wetland areas. While this is the lowest score, it still indicates a moderate level of concern among residents. Respondents appear to recognize the risk but view it as less immediate compared to waste and pollution problems. Similar findings were observed in Iloilo, where residents expressed lower concern about construction-related erosion when preventive measures, such as proper site planning and soil stabilization, were implemented (Libe-Torres et al., 2024b). Recent Philippine research also emphasized that construction-related tourism risks were perceived as manageable when developments were coupled with proper safeguards and environmental monitoring (Fernandez-Abila et al., 2024d). In sum, residents are moderately concerned about the environmental risks of eco-tourism, particularly regarding waste management and regulatory enforcement, underscoring the need for strict policies and sustainable practices to protect the local ecosystem.

II.	**Indicators** **Economic Challenges**	**Weighted Mean**	**Description**
1.	Foreign investors may benefit more than local entrepreneurs from the tourism industry.	3.50	Very Concerned
2.	The development may increase the cost of living (e.g., rising prices of goods and services).	3.48	Very Concerned
3.	The economic benefits of eco-tourism may not be equally distributed among residents.	3.36	Very Concerned
4.	Tourism-related price inflation may make essential goods and services unaffordable for low-income families.	3.30	Very Concerned
5.	The project may result in land displacement and property loss for some residents.	3.24	Moderately Concerned
6.	Local businesses may struggle to compete with larger tourism-related enterprises.	3.22	Moderately Concerned
7.	The government may impose higher taxes or fees on local businesses to fund tourism infrastructure.	3.22	Moderately Concerned
8.	Some local businesses may rely too heavily on tourism, making them vulnerable during the off-season.	3.18	Moderately Concerned

9.	Tourism jobs created may be seasonal or low-wage, leading to job insecurity.	3.12	Moderately Concerned
10.	Dependence on tourism may weaken other traditional livelihoods such as farming and fishing.	3.06	Moderately Concerned
	Sub-Composite Mean	**3.27**	**Very Concerned**

Legend: *Very Concerned (VC) 3.26-4.00; Moderately Concerned (MC) 2.51- 3.25; Slightly Concerned (SC) 1.76- 2.50; Not Concerned (NC) 1.00- 1.75*

Table 4.2 Concerns About the Proposed Eco-tourism Development in Terms of Economic Challenges (N=50)

Table 4.2 presents residents' responses on their level of concern about how eco-tourism may affect local livelihoods, businesses, and overall economic stability. The sub-composite mean of 3.27, interpreted as "Very Concerned," reflects the general sentiment of respondents toward the project's possible economic challenges. This result suggests that residents are highly aware of the potential negative effects of eco-tourism, particularly issues related to income distribution, cost of living, and the vulnerability of local businesses. Similar findings were reported in Samar, where communities expressed concerns about unequal benefits from tourism and the risk of marginalization in development projects (Fabillar et al., 2025b). Studies have also found that tourism-led growth in small Philippine islands can raise prices and put pressure on low-income households, even as it creates income opportunities (Fernandez-Abila et al., 2024). This highlights the importance of developing fair tourism policies that ensure income equity and protect small-scale enterprises from being overshadowed by large investors.

The highest weighted mean of 3.50 is associated with the concern that foreign investors may benefit more than local entrepreneurs from the tourism industry. This indicates that residents are particularly cautious about the possibility of outside investors monopolizing opportunities while local communities gain less. Similar concerns were raised in Zamboanga City, where institutional weaknesses allowed external actors to capture much of the economic gains while local entrepreneurs struggled (Bernardo et al., 2024). Residents emphasize that when investment control shifts toward outsiders, local identity and ownership may also weaken, resulting in limited participation of small business owners in decision-making. Residents emphasize that when investment control shifts to outsiders, local identity and ownership may weaken, limiting small business owners' participation in decision-making. Thus, promoting local empowerment through community-managed enterprises, transparent investment policies, and profit-sharing mechanisms will help ensure that tourism profits remain within the community and support sustainable local growth (Brun et al., 2024a).

The lowest weighted mean of 3.06 reflects concern that dependence on tourism may weaken other traditional livelihoods, such as farming and fishing. While still indicating moderate concern, this suggests that residents believe eco-tourism could gradually shift reliance away from long-standing local industries. Studies in Iloilo found that tourism development can redirect labor away from agriculture and fisheries, raising questions about the sustainability of traditional livelihoods (Libe-Torres et al., 2024c). Research during the COVID-19 pandemic also showed that tourism-dependent communities were among the most vulnerable to income shocks, underscoring the risks of over-reliance on tourism (Huynh et al., 2022). Many residents fear that younger generations might abandon farming and fishing in favor of short-term tourism jobs, which could threaten food security and reduce local self-sufficiency. Hence, livelihood diversification and sustainable resource management programs must be integrated into eco-tourism planning to protect traditional occupations and ensure that development strengthens, rather than replaces, the community's existing economic foundations.

III.	**Indicators** **Social Issues**	**Weighted Mean**	**Description**
1.	Tourism development might create social divisions between those who benefit from it and those who do not.	3.30	Very Concerned
2.	There could be conflicts between residents and tourists due to differences in behavior and customs	3.28	Very Concerned
3.	Some tourists' behavior may not align with local traditions, leading to misunderstandings.	3.26	Very Concerned
4.	Traditional values and cultural identity may be diluted due to outside influences.	3.24	Moderately Concerned
5.	There may be an increase in traffic congestion and noise pollution.	3.22	Moderately Concerned
6.	Some community members may be excluded from decision-making regarding the project.	3.18	Moderately Concerned
7.	The development may cause an increase in crime and social conflicts	3.16	Moderately Concerned

8.	Local residents may feel disconnected from their own community due to the changes brought by tourism.	3.12	Moderately Concerned
9.	The project might favor outsiders for employment rather than local residents.	3.10	Moderately Concerned
10.	The presence of tourists may lead to overcrowding, affecting the daily lives of residents.	3.08	Moderately Concerned
	Sub-Composite Mean	**3.19**	**Moderately Concerned**

Legend: *Very Concerned (VC) 3.26-4.00; Moderately Concerned (MC) 2.51- 3.25; Slightly Concerned (SC) 1.76- 2.50; Not Concerned (NC) 1.00- 1.75*

Table 4.3. Concerns About the Proposed Eco-tourism Development in Terms of Social Issues (N=50)

Table 4.3 presents residents' responses on their level of concern about social impacts, including community division, cultural change, conflicts with tourists, and exclusion from decision-making. The sub-composite mean of 3.19, interpreted as "Moderately Concerned," reflects the overall attitude of respondents toward the project's social risks. This score indicates that residents acknowledge potential social tensions from eco-tourism, such as unequal benefit distribution, behavioral clashes with visitors, and shifts in community identity, but view these risks as manageable if proper safeguards and inclusive policies are put in place. Similar moderate concern over social impacts has been reported in Southeast Asian coastal communities, where tourism expansion raised worries about inequality and cultural change unless communities were actively engaged (Pham et al., 2021a). Rural tourism has also been shown to create mixed social reactions, with pride and income for some but cultural unease and exclusion for others (López-Sanz et al., 2021a).

The highest weighted mean of 3.30 indicates concern that tourism development might create social divisions between those who benefit and those who do not. This suggests residents are most worried about fairness and who gains from tourism activities. Such concerns are common where external investors or better-connected actors capture most of the gains, leaving vulnerable households marginalized. Resident satisfaction tends to decline when local benefits from tourism are perceived as unfair or unevenly shared (Nunkoo, 2022). Perceptions of tourism dependency and governance are also negatively impacted when residents feel that inequality or favoritism undermines fair community benefits (Durkin et al., 2021).

The lowest weighted mean of 3.08 concerns the worry that tourist presence may lead to overcrowding, affecting residents' daily lives. Although this is the least pressing of the listed social concerns, it still signals a real issue, as residents accept visitors but worry about changes in daily routines, traffic, noise, and access to public spaces. Perceived overcrowding and nuisances have been shown to reduce local support for tourism unless visitor management and community consultation are prioritized (Tsai et al., 2022). Studies show that poor governance in coastal areas can lead to overtourism and weaken community support, while active community involvement helps build resilience (Nunkoo, 2022a). In summary, residents express moderate concern about social impacts, such as unequal benefits and community division, and emphasize the need for inclusive planning and fair benefit-sharing.

Indicators	Sub-Composite Mean	Description
Economic Challenges	3.27	Very Concerned
Environmental Risk	3.25	Moderately Concerned
Social Issues	3.19	Moderately Concerned
Composite Mean	**3.24**	**Moderately Concerned**

Legend: *Very Concerned (VC) 3.26-4.00; Moderately Concerned (MC) 2.51- 3.25; Slightly Concerned (SC) 1.76- 2.50; Not Concerned (NC) 1.00- 1.75*

Table 5. Summary on the Perceived Concerns About the Proposed Eco-Tourism Development in the BISU- Candijay Fishpond (n=50)

Table 5 presents the concerns about the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond. The sub-composite means for the three dimensions are: economic challenges (3.27), environmental risk (3.25), and social issues (3.19). The overall composite mean is 3.24, which falls within the "moderately concerned" range, showing that residents hold notable reservations about the project. Among the three, the lowest sub-composite mean is social issues (3.19). However, it still indicates moderate concern, suggesting that while respondents worry less about social factors than about economic and environmental factors, these issues remain relevant in shaping community perceptions.

The highest concern, economic challenges (3.27), falls under the "very concerned" category. This reflects residents' apprehension about potential financial burdens, including inflation in local goods, land-use conflicts, and the possibility of an unequal distribution of tourism income. Unequal profit distribution in tourism ventures has been shown to disadvantage marginalized groups and weaken local support (Zeng et al., 2021). Likewise, exclusion from tourism decision-making can create economic vulnerabilities and increase fears of displacement and resource exploitation (Pham et al., 2021b). These findings align with the concerns of Candijay residents, who perceive economic risks as the most pressing issue.

The concern over environmental risks (3.25) reflects respondents' awareness of potential ecological threats, including habitat disturbance, waste mismanagement, and biodiversity loss. Eco-tourism must balance visitor access with environmental preservation to avoid long-term harm. When tourism activities exceed ecological carrying capacity, they can result in severe environmental degradation (Long et al., 2022). Similarly, without strong safeguards, eco-tourism in sensitive ecosystems has been shown to create environmental pressures such as habitat disturbance and biodiversity loss, rather than supporting conservation (de Lima et al., 2021). This perspective aligns with Candijay residents' concerns, who recognize that while eco-tourism can support conservation, it also carries risks if mismanaged.

The lowest mean concern is social issues (3.19), which still falls within the "moderately concerned" range. Although residents are less anxious about cultural disruption than about economic and environmental threats, they remain cautious about risks such as cultural commodification, generational divides, and weakening of community cohesion. Research shows that tourism development can commercialize traditions and affect cultural pride if not carefully managed (López-Sanz et al., 2021b). Conversely, when communities are actively engaged in cultural and heritage-based tourism planning, social cohesion is strengthened, and residents develop a greater sense of identity and pride (Huang et al., 2024). These insights suggest that Candijay residents may view social challenges as manageable when meaningfully involved in the planning process.

Overall, the composite mean of 3.24 demonstrates that while residents moderately support the development, they remain cautious due to anticipated challenges, particularly in the economic and environmental dimensions. The consistency of moderate concerns across all indicators highlights the importance of careful planning, equitable benefit distribution, and participatory decision-making. Addressing community apprehensions early through inclusive governance fosters trust and enhances long-term sustainability (Nunkoo, 2022b). Therefore, while the residents of Candijay recognize the potential of eco-tourism, their concerns emphasize the need for transparent, inclusive, and environmentally responsible management practices.

Socio-Demographic Variable	χ^2	df	N	P	Interpretation
Sex	3.39	1	50	.066	Not significant
Age	5.20	5	50	.392	Not significant
Educational Attainment	14.70	8	50	.065	Not significant (near significance)
Civil Status	4.84	2	50	.089	Not significant
Occupation	2.86	9	50	.970	Not significant
Length of Residency	12.50	4	50	.014	Significant

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests of Independence Between Socio-Demographic Variables and Perceptions of Ecotourism Project Benefits (n=50)

Table 6 presents the results of the Chi-Square tests examining the relationship between residents' socio-demographic characteristics and their perceptions of the benefits of the ecotourism project. The results indicate that sex was not significantly related to perception, χ^2 (1, N = 50) = 3.39, p = .066, suggesting no meaningful association between being male or female and views on ecotourism. This finding is consistent with a Philippine community study in Lobo, Batangas, which likewise found that gender (sex) did not produce statistically significant differences in residents' assessments of ecotourism prospects (Gonzales, 2022). Likewise, age showed no significant relationship with perception, χ^2(5, N = 50) = 5.20, p = .392, indicating that respondents' views were not correlated with age. This pattern echoes results from a multi-site CALABARZON protected-areas study, where age and sex were not significant predictors of overall community perception/wellbeing for several ecotourism indicators (Ruiz & Apritado, 2024).

The relationship between educational attainment and perception was also not statistically significant, χ^2 (8, N = 50) = 14.70, p = .065, though the result was close to significance. This points to a possible but inconclusive link that may be clarified in future studies with larger samples. Similarly, civil status was unrelated to perception, χ^2(2, N = 50) = 4.84, p = .089, and occupation showed no significant association, χ^2(9, N = 50) = 2.86, p = .970. These results suggest that residents' views on

the benefits of ecotourism were generally unrelated to their marital or employment status. Similar findings have been reported in recent Philippine studies: a quantitative survey of tourists at an agri-tourism farm in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija, found that socio-demographic groupings did not consistently predict differences in satisfaction or perception metrics (Lucas et al., 2024). In a larger descriptive study of rural tourism in Surigao del Norte, chi-square analyses also showed that perceptions of impacts and challenges were largely shared across demographic groups, with few consistent differences (Supera et al., 2024). Likewise, a chi-square-based community study of an ecotourism project in Caramoan found no relationship between several socio-demographic characteristics (including age, educational attainment, and civil status) and residents' levels of participation or awareness, indicating broadly similar perceptions across these groups (Amata, 2022).

In contrast, length of residency demonstrated a significant relationship with perception, χ^2 (4, N = 50) = 12.50, p = .014. This indicates that how long residents had lived in the community was meaningfully associated with their views of ecotourism benefits. Longer-term and newer residents appeared to frame the advantages of ecotourism differently, reflecting the influence of community experience on perceptions. While direct Philippine chi-square evidence is rare, related studies point toward similar dynamics. For instance, in a multi-island study of sustainable tourism in the Philippines, Fernandez-Abila et al. (2024) found that stakeholders' level of engagement and perceived benefits correlated with their depth of local connection and familiarity with their community's tourism systems. Similarly, a study of place image and community support in Cotabato province reported that residents' sense of attachment (which often increases with years in residence) was a predictor of support for tourism development (Villamor et al., 2024).
Overall, while most socio-demographic factors were not significantly related to residents' perceptions of ecotourism benefits, length of residency emerged as a key factor. This highlights the importance of considering local experience and community attachment in understanding how people view ecotourism initiatives.

Socio- Demographic Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	0.467	2	0.792	Not significant
Age	9.09	10	0.524	Not significant
Educational Attainment	14.3	16	0.575	Not significant
Civil Status	4.86	4	0.302	Not significant
Occupation	15.3	18	0.640	Not significant
Length of Residency	11.5	8	0.176	Not significant

Table 7 Chi-Square Tests of Independence Between Socio-Demographic Variables and Perceptions of Ecotourism Project Concerns (n = 50)

Table 7 presents the Chi-square test of independence, which was conducted to examine the relationship between socio-demographic variables and respondents' perceptions of the concerns regarding the development of an ecotourism project. Results revealed that sex (χ^2 = 0.467, df = 2, p = 0.792), age (χ^2 = 9.09, df = 10, p = 0.524), educational attainment (χ^2 = 14.3, df = 16, p = 0.575), civil status (χ^2 = 4.86, df = 4, p = 0.302), occupation (χ^2 = 15.3, df = 18, p = 0.640), and length of residency (χ^2 = 11.5, df = 8, p = 0.176) all produced p-values greater than 0.05. These findings indicate that none of the socio-demographic characteristics are significantly associated with respondents' perception of ecotourism concerns.

Similar results were reported in Nueva Ecija, where assessments of sustainable tourism practices at a nature-based attraction showed no significant variation across sex and age groups, suggesting that sustainability perceptions cut across demographic lines (Dela Cruz et al., 2024). Likewise, a comparative study of blue-carbon ecosystems in the Philippines found that awareness and place-based context influenced local perceptions more strongly than socio-demographic traits, underscoring that collective ecological consciousness outweighs individual characteristics (Quevedo et al., 2021). Research in Palaui Island further revealed that participation and inclusion in ecotourism planning were the real determinants of varying perceptions, rather than demographic differences, highlighting the primacy of community-wide involvement in shaping attitudes (Tan et al., 2021). These studies support the interpretation that shared values, local context, and inclusive participation better explain community concerns about ecotourism than demographic categories alone.

This implies that perceptions of the development of an ecotourism project are broadly shared across the community, regardless of sex, age, educational background, marital status, occupation, or years of residency. In other words, concerns about ecotourism appear to be community-wide issues shaped more by collective experiences and shared values than by individual demographic differences. This result reflects residents' unified perspective on environmental protection and

sustainable development, indicating that awareness of ecological issues transcends personal background. It also suggests that community members, regardless of their roles or status, share a common interest in ensuring that tourism initiatives remain environmentally sound and socially inclusive. Thus, fostering cooperation, participatory decision-making, and continuous community dialogue will further strengthen this shared understanding and commitment to responsible eco-tourism development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study assessed residents' perceptions of the proposed eco-tourism development in the BISU-Candijay Fishpond, highlighting both its perceived benefits and concerns. Findings revealed that residents strongly agreed on the project's potential to generate employment, improve income, strengthen cultural identity, and promote environmental conservation. These positive views reflect optimism toward eco-tourism as a driver of livelihood opportunities and sustainable development. Despite these benefits, residents also expressed concerns about possible environmental risks, economic challenges, and socio-cultural issues. Waste generation, habitat disturbance, unequal benefit distribution, and cultural dilution emerged as notable apprehensions that require careful attention. The analysis further indicated that socio-demographic factors generally had no significant influence on perceptions, except for the length of residency, which shaped how long-term residents viewed the project. Overall, the study concludes that the proposed eco-tourism development presents promising opportunities for Candijay, Bohol. However, its long-term success depends on inclusive planning, equitable benefit-sharing, and effective environmental safeguards. Addressing these concerns will be essential to ensuring that eco-tourism becomes a sustainable, community-supported initiative.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.