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Bahay-LiKHA's Local Conference on Bataan Studies: A Journey Toward Shared Commitment for Local History, Culture, and Heritage Studies

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ABSTRACT

There is a need for a renewed interest in conducting heritage-centered conferences and community initiatives to promote cultural identity, historical consciousness, and heritage preservation among the locals. The present study was designed to evaluate the Local Conference on Bataan Studies, held in the province of Bataan, Philippines, and organized by the Bahay-LiKHA R&D Center of Bataan Peninsula State University. Using the Training and Development (T&D) research design, the study analyzed data from 54 conference participants who responded to the evaluation. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were employed to interpret the results. The findings revealed that attendees expressed overwhelming satisfaction with their overall experience, presenter evaluation, and webinar format and structure. Only a small minority suggested improvements, such as conducting similar conferences onsite or including more presenters from local government units (LGUs). This highlights how the local community values the significance of such conferences and underscores the need to continuously advocate for their continuation.

Keywords: *Local Conference, Bataan Studies, Local History, Local Culture, Heritage Studies*

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1. Introduction

Cultural heritage plays an important role in preserving local identity, traditions, and historical awareness within communities. It serves as a bridge between the past and present by allowing people to appreciate and preserve the values, practices, and stories inherited from previous generations. Studies emphasized that local history and heritage initiatives contribute to the preservation of cultural resources and promote greater

appreciation of history, culture, and identity within communities (Jackson, 2008; Perez & Templanza, 2012). Furthermore, cultural heritage strengthens social cohesion, sense of belonging, and cultural continuity among local communities (Bo & Rani, 2025; Cerisola & Panzera, 2025).

Community participation has also been recognized as a significant factor in sustaining heritage conservation efforts. Ismail (2013) emphasized that active local community involvement improves heritage management and strengthens community attachment to cultural resources. Similarly, Nam and Thanh (2024) emphasized that grassroots participation plays a crucial role in preserving both tangible and intangible heritage, while ensuring culturally relevant and sustainable conservation practices. Mydland and Grahn (2011) further explained that local heritage preservation is often motivated by the desire to maintain social identity and community connection. In addition, participatory initiatives such as community-based activities and participatory arts were found to enhance public engagement and cultural diversity in heritage preservation (Ke & Mustafa, 2024).

Studies also underscored the importance of heritage education and local cultural narratives in strengthening cultural appreciation and identity formation. Banda et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of integrating heritage into education and using modern approaches to preserve cultural narratives. Suárez-Álvarez and Otero-Varela (2025) stressed the role of future educators in promoting cultural appreciation and conservation. Likewise, Buo and Hermosa (2025) found that historical consciousness positively influences appreciation of local cultural heritage, while Putri et al. (2025) revealed that heritage-related educational programs and community participation help strengthen nationalism, civic responsibility, and public appreciation of historical values. These findings suggest that heritage-centered educational and community initiatives can strengthen awareness, appreciation, and preservation of local culture and history.

In line with these concepts, the Bahay LiKHA ng Bataan R&D Center of Bataan Peninsula State University, Philippines, conceptualized and implemented the *Local Conference on Bataan Studies* as an initiative to promote awareness, appreciation, and preservation of Bataan's local history, culture, and heritage. The conference aimed to provide a platform for scholars, educators, students, researchers, and community members to discuss local historical narratives, cultural practices, and heritage preservation initiatives. It was also envisioned to encourage community participation, strengthen cultural identity, and foster a shared commitment toward sustaining local history and heritage studies in Bataan.

Despite the growing body of literature on cultural heritage preservation, several research gaps remain evident. Existing studies commonly focus on heritage management, tourism development, conservation policies, heritage discourse, and sense of place in heritage sites (Aguda et al., 2013; Amper, 2013; Bakri et al., 2022; Lin, 2025; Bo & Abdul Rani, 2025; Buted & Felicen, 2023; Cabutihan & Torres, 2025; Cerisola & Panzera, 2025; Diaz et al., 2024; Gumiran & Solano, 2022; Viray, 2025; Ricio et al., 2021; Zerrudo & Pama, 2022). While these studies highlighted the importance of community involvement and cultural appreciation, limited studies have explored how local academic and community-based heritage initiatives, such as local conferences, contribute to strengthening cultural awareness, historical appreciation, and community engagement within specific local contexts. Moreover, there remains limited localized research examining how participatory heritage programs influence people's understanding, appreciation, and preservation of local culture and history. This gap highlights the need for further investigation in the role of heritage-centered conferences and community initiatives in promoting cultural identity, historical consciousness, and heritage preservation. More so, another research gap lies in the limited integration of community-based heritage scholarship with participatory conservation, risk assessment, and destination management (Cowley et al., 2022; Kaul et al., 2025; Nwankwo & Itanyi, 2019), especially in underrepresented Global South contexts such as the Philippines. While existing studies address heritage tourism, local studies centers, and stakeholder engagement (Gultiano & Felicilda, 2025; Perez & Templanza, 2012), few offer a province-specific platform for collaborative research and public engagement. In the contexts of such research gaps, the Bahay-LiKHA's local conference on Bataan Studies contributes an original, place-based model that fosters shared commitment among researchers, cultural custodians, institutions, and communities to advance local history, culture, and heritage studies.

This concurrent study holds significant value in fulfilling the researcher's objectives and the university's research mandates, focusing on innovating and transforming local culture, history, and heritage (Perez & Templanza, 2012). It also emphasizes the importance of local studies collections (Nolan, 2014) and promotes the integration of cultural heritage and education (Felgueiras et al., 2022) for possible immersive experiences in conducting local and indigenous studies (Pecson et al., 2024). Evaluating such local academic conference is important because it determines whether the event genuinely documents and interprets Bataan's heritage while enabling residents, cultural custodians, educators, and institutions to participate meaningfully in research

and decision-making. It also assesses whether the conference strengthens cultural education, public awareness, and sustained heritage-protection efforts beyond a one-time academic gathering.

The following are the pieces of literature reviewed in the study:

Community Participation and Cultural Heritage Preservation

Studies consistently emphasize that community participation plays a crucial role in preserving and sustaining cultural heritage. Perez and Templanza (2012) highlighted the importance of local studies centers in promoting history, culture, and heritage through the collection of archives, museum artifacts, and research materials that strengthen local identity and awareness. Likewise, Banda et al. (2024) stressed that community-centered conservation approaches are essential in preserving cultural heritage, particularly when heritage education and local participation are integrated into safeguarding initiatives. Ismail (2013) further explained that although communities are highly attached to their heritage resources, meaningful involvement in heritage management is often limited by centralized governance structures and restricted participation in decision-making processes. Similarly, Ke and Mustafa (2024) emphasized that participatory approaches encourage stronger public engagement, cultural diversity, and social cohesion in heritage preservation activities.

In the Philippine context, several studies demonstrated that local traditions, oral narratives, cultural mapping, and festivals significantly contribute to preserving cultural identity and strengthening community awareness. Bilason et al. (2020) emphasized that religious festivals possess historical, social, spiritual, and economic significance that require safeguarding plans to ensure long-term preservation. Castor (2024) highlighted the value of retelling oral narratives in preserving Philippine heritage and promoting cultural appreciation among younger generations through theater and education. Besmonte (2020), Besmonte et al. (2022), and Pastera (2024) also stressed that cultural mapping serves as an essential strategy for documenting and protecting both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in local communities. Furthermore, Udtujan (2025) found that festivals foster cultural identity, historical awareness, and meaningful learning experiences, particularly when teachers and community leaders collaborate in sustaining local traditions. These studies suggest that community participation and cultural education remain crucial in preserving cultural heritage and fostering local identity.

Heritage Preservation, Education, and Sustainable Development

Existing literature also establishes the connection between cultural heritage preservation, education, and sustainable development. Cruz and Roldan (2024) argued that heritage conservation and urban development can coexist through heritage-driven economic frameworks that strengthen local economies and create employment opportunities. Similarly, Cruz (2017, 2022, 2024) emphasized that heritage should not be viewed as an obstacle to modernization but rather as a foundation for sustainable urban revitalization and economic development. Zerrudo and Pama (2022) further supported this perspective by proposing a value-based and interdisciplinary heritage charter for Vigan that recognizes the importance of conserving not only built heritage but also intangible cultural resources. These studies collectively demonstrate that cultural heritage contributes not only to identity preservation but also to sustainable economic and social development.

Several studies also underscored the importance of education in strengthening historical awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage. Buo and Hermosa (2025) found a strong positive relationship between students' historical consciousness and their appreciation of local cultural heritage, suggesting that culturally responsive and place-based education can enhance cultural identity and civic awareness. Santos (2021) likewise emphasized the need to strengthen local history education and local studies programs to improve students' appreciation of heritage. In addition, Álvarez and Otero-Varela (2025) noted that future educators must possess adequate knowledge and understanding of cultural heritage to effectively promote preservation and appreciation among learners. Other studies also highlighted the importance of collaboration among stakeholders, museums, local governments, and educational institutions in ensuring successful heritage conservation initiatives (Baliwag, 2025; Borja et al., 2021; Estacio, 2022). These findings support the present study by demonstrating that heritage preservation is closely linked to education, awareness, and sustainable community development.

2. Method

The present study adopted the Training and Development (T&D) research design for its methodology. This design emphasizes needs assessment, training design, program implementation, and program evaluation. This design was appropriate because the Bahay-LiKHA conference was developed to address stakeholders' research and capacity-building needs, implemented as a structured learning activity, and evaluated through feedback from its participants.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the training proposal for the Local Conference on Bataan Studies was developed based on the R&D center's needs, with a focus on research related to the province of Bataan. During the

conference, invited speakers and presenters from local government units (LGUs) and academia shared their research papers, followed by an open forum. The participants included research enthusiasts, LGU employees, academicians, and students from various academic institutions in Bataan. During the conference, invited resource persons, researchers, and experts described the specific historical, cultural, and heritage-related issues discussed, such as Bataan's wartime legacy, local traditions, and the documentation of town histories and cultural heritages, and explained how such builds a shared understanding of local identity, positioning the conference as a knowledge-production initiative rather than merely an evaluated educational activity. The discussions and the forum also critically examined academic–community relations in conducting local studies, emphasizing greater local government involvement into a broader analysis of institutional collaboration, public participation, and local governance in sustaining heritage preservation.

The study involved 54 conference participants who responded to the conference evaluation. The conference participants serving as respondents which included research enthusiasts, LGU employees, academicians, and students from various academic institutions in Bataan were purposively selected because they directly attended and benefited from the conference, making them best positioned to evaluate its relevance, organization, and outcomes.

The research instrument used was an evaluation tool previously employed by the R&D center for its training programs. The said evaluation tool was previously used for its training programs, consisting of 8 closed-ended items organized into 3 domains on overall experience, presenter evaluation, and webinar format and structure. Responses were rated using a 5-point Likert scale from [1 = poor] to [5 = excellent]; the instrument had undergone validation and reliability testing process under the Research and Development (RDO) of the University.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were utilized, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Specifically, the mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the evaluation of the Local Conference on Bataan Studies in terms of the overall experience, presenter evaluation, and webinar format and structure, while frequency and percentage were applied to identify areas for improvement in the conference.

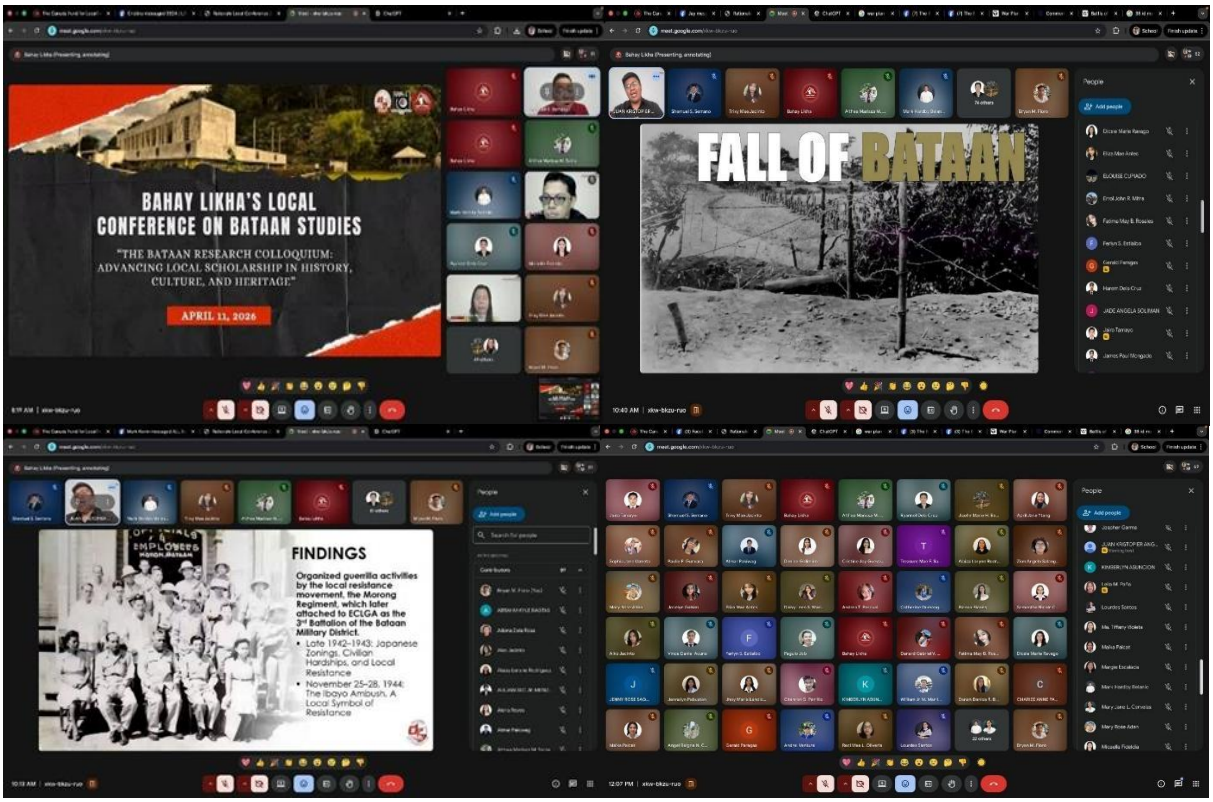


Figure 1. Conference Proper

3. Result and Discussion

Table 1 presents the evaluation of participants on the Local Conference on Bataan Studies conducted by the Bahay-LiKHA ng Bataan R&D Center.

Table 1. Evaluation of the Local Conference on Bataan Studies

Domains | Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation

A. Overall Experience	4.81	0.39	Excellent
1. How satisfied were you with the overall quality of the webinar?	4.80	0.41	Excellent
2. How would you rate the clarity of the information presented?	4.80	0.41	Excellent
3. How useful was the content for your professional or personal development?	4.85	0.36	Excellent
B. Presenter Evaluation	4.77	0.42	Excellent
1. How would you rate the presenters' knowledge of the topics?	4.81	0.39	Excellent
2. How would you rate the presenters' delivery and communication skills?	4.74	0.44	Excellent
3. Did the presenters encourage interaction and engagement?	4.76	0.43	Excellent
C. Webinar Format and Structure	4.75	0.44	Excellent
1. How would you rate the webinar's organization and structure?	4.80	0.41	Excellent
2. Was the time allocated for the webinar sufficient?	4.70	0.46	Excellent
Composite	4.78	0.41	Excellent

Scale of Means: 5 [4.21-5.00 Excellent], 4 [3.41-4.20 Good], 3 [2.61-3.40 Average], 2 [1.81-2.60 Fair], 1 [1.00-1.80 Poor]

The evaluation of the Local Conference on Bataan Studies yielded consistently Excellent ratings across all domains, reflecting high participant satisfaction. For *Overall Experience* (Mean=4.81; SD=0.39), participants expressed strong satisfaction with the webinar's quality (Mean=4.80; SD=0.41), clarity of information (Mean=4.80; SD=0.41), and usefulness of the content for professional or personal development (Mean=4.85; SD=0.36), with the latter receiving the highest mean score. In the *Presenter Evaluation* domain (Mean=4.77; SD=0.42), the presenters' knowledge (Mean=4.81; SD=0.39), delivery and communication skills (Mean=4.74; SD=0.44), and ability to encourage interaction (Mean=4.76; SD=0.43) were all rated as Excellent. The *Webinar Format and Structure* domain (Mean=4.75; SD=0.44) also received high marks, with participants praising the organization and structure (Mean=4.80; SD=0.41) and the sufficiency of the allocated time (Mean=4.70; SD=0.46). Overall, the composite score for the conference was Excellent (Mean=4.78; SD=0.41), demonstrating a highly successful and well-received event.

The consistently excellent ratings suggest strong participant satisfaction, but may be influenced by social desirability bias, a ceiling effect, and nonresponse bias, and reflect only immediate perceptions rather than objective evidence of learning or long-term impact. Future evaluations should therefore pair Likert-scale ratings with open-ended feedback, follow-up surveys, and concrete outcome indicators to demonstrate lasting contributions to heritage preservation and community participation.

Interestingly, the conference's consistent excellent ratings received across all domains reflects high participant satisfaction with the overall experience, presenters, and webinar structure. These results align with existing literature, such as Perez and Templanza (2012), who emphasized the role of local studies centers in promoting history, culture, and heritage, as well as Banda et al. (2024), who highlighted the importance of community-centered approaches in preserving cultural heritage. The overwhelmingly positive feedback underscores the effectiveness of participatory initiatives in fostering cultural appreciation and awareness, reinforcing the findings of Ke and Mustafa (2024) and Udtujan (2025), who stressed the value of community engagement in heritage preservation.

Table 2. Areas of improvement for the Local Conference on Bataan Studies

Items	Frequency *(n=54)*	Percentage
1. None (No improvements needed)	49	90.74
2. Conduct face-to-face (onsite) conference	3	5.56
3. More presenters from the LGUs	1	1.85
4. Conduct more similar training/conference	1	1.85
Total	54	100.00

Scale of Means: 5 [4.21-5.00 Excellent], 4 [3.41-4.20 Good], 3 [2.61-3.40 Average], 2 [1.81-2.60 Fair], 1 [1.00-1.80 Poor]

As presented in Table 2, the evaluation of areas of improvement for the Local Conference on Bataan Studies revealed that an overwhelming majority of participants (90.74%, n=49) felt no improvements were needed, indicating high satisfaction with the event as it was conducted. A small portion of respondents (5.56%, n=3) suggested transitioning to a face-to-face (onsite) conference format, while 1.85% (n=1) each proposed including more presenters from the LGUs or conducting more similar training/conferences in the future. These

results highlight that the conference was highly effective in its current form, with minimal suggestions for change.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants of the Local Conference on Bataan Studies, with 90.74% indicating no improvements were needed, aligns with literature emphasizing the effectiveness of community-centered approaches in cultural heritage preservation. As highlighted by Banda et al. (2024) and Ke and Mustafa (2024), participatory initiatives foster stronger public engagement, cultural diversity, and social cohesion, reinforcing the conference's success in meeting community expectations. The minimal suggestions for change further reflect the high satisfaction and relevance of such events in promoting local identity and awareness, as supported by Perez and Templanza (2012) and Udtujan (2025).

4. Conclusion

The *Local Conference on Bataan Studies* received consistently Excellent ratings across all evaluated domains, reflecting high participant satisfaction with the overall experience, presenters, and webinar structure. An overwhelming majority of attendees felt no improvements were needed, while a small minority suggested minor enhancements, such as transitioning to an onsite format or including more presenters from local government units (LGUs). These results underscore the success and effectiveness of the conference and highlight the strong local appreciation for such initiatives, reinforcing the need for their continued advocacy.

More so, the uniformly excellent ratings capture only immediate participant satisfaction at the close of the conference, and cannot by themselves establish longer-term outcomes such as increased historical consciousness, sustained community engagement, or the adoption of actual heritage preservation practices. To bridge this gap, future evaluations should incorporate follow-up assessments, interviews, and concrete outcome indicators that track whether the event's perceived quality translated into durable changes in knowledge, participation, and preservation work.

The Bahay-LiKHA R&D Center may conduct similar Training and Development (T&D) studies in the future to further promote the local heritage and history of Bataan. This can be achieved through collaborative partnerships with local government units (LGUs) and other agencies or institutions that share the same advocacy. Also, the R&D Center may consider further other factors behind its success, such as topic relevance, local participation, accessibility, and links to local heritage, and the conditions needed for replication, to offer a transferable contribution to heritage studies, local history, and community-based cultural development.

5. Acknowledgements

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6. Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare no conflict of interest in the conduct of the study.

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