Exploring University Students' Awareness of Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance: A Multi-Theoretical Approach

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Abstract

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has become a topic of international concern. This study aims to explore university students' awareness and perceptions of ICH inheritance by employing multiple theoretical frameworks. The research will encompass micro-meso-macro level management practices, students' involvement theory, and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) to comprehensively understand how these factors influence students' perceptions of ICH. By integrating these theories, this study aims to establish connections and highlight the interdependencies among them. Recognizing the interplay between individual engagement, group dynamics, organizational practices, and the cultural and historical context will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors influence students' awareness of cultural heritage preservation. Finally, this study seeks to provide valuable insights for fostering and developing university students' awareness of ICH inheritance, offering both theoretical guidance and practical implications.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH); Cultural Education; Micro-Meso-Macro Level of Management Practices; Students' Involvement Theory; Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

1. Introduction

Ever since UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2003, there has been a surge in international interest and discussions surrounding the subject related to ICH [9,10]. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines ICH as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the associated tools, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage" [25]. The safeguarding of ICH has transcended national boundaries and transformed into a global social and cultural movement, leaving a profound impact not only at the local and national levels but also on the international arena [16, 34].

ICH safeguarding practices vary significantly across different countries, groups, and individuals, tailored to their unique contexts and requirements. To foster increased engagement and wider participation, the approach to ICH preservation has evolved from being confined to a single-industry focus to one that necessitates engagement across various societal domains [34]. In the context of ICH safeguarding, the diversity among countries, groups, and individuals becomes apparent, as each entity possesses unique cultural assets and values that warrant specific protection practices tailored to their particular contexts. Recognizing these variations, the approach to ICH preservation has evolved over time, shifting from a narrow focus on individual industries to a broader perspective that emphasizes the importance of collective involvement from various sectors of society. Governments, communities, scholars, and various organizations across the world have acknowledged the importance of safeguarding and promoting ICH as a means to protect traditional knowledge, customs, and practices, which are at risk of disappearing in the face of globalization and modernization [33].

Furthermore, the increasing interest in ICH has led to a deeper understanding of its value in shaping identities, fostering a sense of belonging, and enhancing social cohesion [34]. As societies become more interconnected, the recognition of ICH as a vital part of humanity's shared heritage has contributed to the promotion of mutual respect, tolerance, and cultural exchange among different communities and nations [18]. With the growing awareness and significance of ICH on the global stage, it has become imperative to delve into its transmission and preservation, especially among the younger generations [35]. The primary objective of this study is to investigate university students' awareness and perceptions of ICH inheritance. By employing a multi-theoretical approach, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence students' understanding and appreciation of this invaluable cultural heritage.

2. Underlying Theories

This section delves into the fundamental theoretical underpinnings that are pertinent to this study. The theoretical frameworks encompass the micro, meso, and macro levels of management practices, students' involvement theory, and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). These theories collectively offer a comprehensive insight into the impact of diverse management practices, student engagement, and cultural and historical contexts on human development and learning.

2.1. Micro-Meso-Macro Level of Management Practices

It is the responsibility of each individual to preserve the cultural assets and values that a society possesses. Awareness is a crucial element for the protection of ICH [1]. From the macro, meso, and micro perspectives, there are several factors that influence students' ability to innovate and awareness of ICH [17, 27, 28].

The macro perspective examines the economic and political environment and the education system. Factors such as the availability of resources and financial support for ICH projects, the government's attitude toward ICH, and the level of education are critical to students' awareness [27, 36]. Macro perspective is a method of understanding a problem or issue by looking at it from a broad, global perspective rather than focusing on the details or individual components [12]. In the context of ICH, the macro perspective may include examining the economic and political environment in which ICH projects are conducted, the broader educational system, and the level of awareness and understanding of students. The meso perspective looks at the social, cultural, and institutional networks. Factors such as the existence of ICH organizations, the level of public commitment to ICH, and the presence of ICH experts are important for students' awareness [31]. In countries with more developed ICH organizations, public engagement with ICH is likely to be greater and more attention is paid to ICH experts [13]. This increased awareness may lead to increased student interest in ICH issues.

The micro perspective focuses on the individual level, including students' educational level, their access to information, and their motivation and interest in ICH [31]. Factors such as students' level of knowledge, attitude toward ICH, and engagement in ICH activities are important in determining students' level of awareness [19]. In addition, the micro perspective assesses the influence of the home environment and family dynamics on students' engagement in ICH. It also considers the impact of the learning environment, such as the quality of the school's curriculum, the availability of resources, and the quality of instruction, on student awareness. Table 1 summarizes the micro and meso levels of management practices, as well as the descriptions, focus, unit of analysis.

Table 1: Micro-Meso-Marco Level of Management Practices and The Descriptions, Focus, Unit of Analysis.

Level	Description	Focus	Unit of Analysis
Micro	Individual	Course or module level	Individual or student
Meso	Institutional	Organizational level including educational institutions, universities, and departments	Organization or university
Macro	National/global	Global and national patterns, policies, and generalizations	Region, state, national or international

2.2. Students' Involvement Theory

The Students' Involvement Theory is a significant theoretical framework that contributes to our understanding of how students engage with and participate in various aspects of their academic and non-academic lives [6,29].

The Students' Involvement Theory was first introduced by Astin in 1984. According to this theory, students' level of involvement and engagement in educational activities and extracurricular pursuits significantly influence their overall educational experience and outcomes [4]. This theory underscores the significance of active engagement in diverse aspects of campus life, encompassing both academic and non-academic endeavors, in shaping students' comprehensive learning experience and personal growth.

The theory identifies three key components of student involvement: time and energy invested, meaningful interactions with faculty and peers, and participation in diverse activities. When students invest time and energy in their educational pursuits, they become more connected to their learning environment, leading to increased motivation and academic success. Meaningful interactions with faculty and peers foster a sense of belonging and support, which contributes to students' overall satisfaction with their college experience. Additionally, participating in diverse activities, such as student clubs, community service, and cultural events, broadens students' perspectives and enriches their personal development [4, 14].

The Students' Involvement Theory posits that three key components of student involvement are crucial in shaping their educational experience: time and energy invested, meaningful interactions with faculty and peers, and participation in diverse activities [2, 4]. When students invest time and energy in their educational pursuits, they become more connected to their learning environment, leading to increased motivation and academic success. Meaningful interactions with faculty and peers foster a sense of belonging and support, which contributes to students' overall satisfaction with their college experience. Additionally, participating in diverse activities, such as student clubs, community service, and cultural events, broadens students' perspectives and enriches their personal development [4, 5].

According to Astin's theory, the quantity and quality of students' participation in various activities play a crucial role in driving their progress, enhancing their educational and pedagogical competencies, and contributing to the development of society [20]. This aligns with the goals and course outcomes of educational projects, where students are required to dedicate sufficient time and effort to their learning activities and class engagement [22,32].

By integrating the Students' Involvement Theory into our research, we can gain deeper insights into the interplay between students' active participation in educational endeavors and their overall educational experiences and achievements. This theoretical framework highlights the significance of fostering a conducive learning environment that encourages students' full involvement in both academic and non-academic aspects of campus life, fostering holistic growth and development.

In our study, we apply the Students' Involvement Theory to examine the relationship between students' active engagement in ICH-related activities and their attitudes and awareness of ICH.

By participating in heritage preservation initiatives, engaging with local communities, or attending cultural events, students may develop a stronger sense of connection to their cultural heritage and a greater sense of responsibility for its safeguarding.

We hypothesize that students who actively involve themselves in ICH-related activities will demonstrate higher levels of awareness and appreciation of ICH. Furthermore, we anticipate that universities can play a significant role in encouraging and supporting students' involvement in ICH preservation efforts through the provision of diverse opportunities and platforms for engagement.

2.3. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

CHAT is a theoretical framework that originated from the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and further developed by his followers, notably Alexander Luria and Alexei Leontiev [7, 26]. CHAT is rooted in the socio-cultural perspective, which posits that human development and learning are deeply influenced by social and cultural interactions [30]. This theory provides a comprehensive understanding of how individuals' cognitive processes are shaped by their interactions with their cultural and historical contexts.

The core premise of CHAT is that human activities, including learning, are mediated by cultural tools and artifacts that are developed and transmitted within specific social and historical contexts [11].

These cultural tools, such as language, symbols, and technologies, act as mediators between individuals and the external world, shaping their cognition and actions.

CHAT represents a comprehensive and dynamic framework for comprehending human development and learning, which integrates the impact of cultural and historical settings on individuals' experiences [15, 23].

CHAT has continued to evolve and gain relevance in contemporary research and educational settings [24]. Scholars have expanded upon CHAT's original concepts, providing new insights and applications.

For instance, researchers have delved into the application of CHAT in diverse educational contexts, including cross-cultural learning environments and inclusive education settings.

By considering the cultural and historical backgrounds of students, educators can tailor instructional approaches to better meet their needs and enhance their learning outcomes [21, 24].

Furthermore, CHAT underscores the role of cultural-historical events, like revolutions and major technological advancements, in the progress of both societies and individuals [8].

The CHAT takes into consideration human consciousness within the context of activities. In this interplay, all elements related to activities and learners impact students' inclinations and learning outcomes [3].

In the context of this research, CHAT offers valuable insights into how students' perceptions and attitudes toward ICH are influenced by their cultural and historical background.

By examining students' interactions with their socio-cultural environment, CHAT helps uncover the underlying socio-cultural processes that contribute to their understanding and appreciation of ICH.

3. Implications

The integration of various theories enables a holistic exploration of university students' awareness of ICH inheritance. The interconnections among the micro, meso, and macro levels of management practices elucidate how individual actions within groups and organizations are influenced by broader societal contexts. Students' involvement theory complements this understanding by emphasizing the active participation of students in their educational experiences, both inside and outside the classroom. It aligns with the micro and meso levels, highlighting the significance of students' engagement within their academic and social environments.

Incorporating CHAT offers a valuable lens to view the intricate relationship between individuals and their cultural and historical milieu. This broader perspective accounts for macro-level influences on students' perceptions of ICH preservation, such as cultural traditions, historical events, and societal norms. Understanding the interplay between these diverse factors is pivotal to comprehending the depth and complexity of students' awareness of ICH.

By recognizing these interdependencies, researchers and educators can develop informed strategies to foster a deeper appreciation and commitment to ICH inheritance among university students. Emphasizing the interconnectedness of micro, meso, and macro factors empowers educators to design comprehensive educational programs that resonate with students' individual experiences, group dynamics, and the broader societal context. This approach holds the potential to enrich the learning experiences of students, instilling in them a sense of responsibility and pride in preserving their cultural heritage for future generations.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to explore university students' awareness of ICH inheritance through a multi-theoretical approach. By integrating the micro-meso-macro level of management practices, students' involvement theory, and CHAT, we aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how these factors influence students' perceptions of ICH.

The integration of these theories deepens our understanding of how students' awareness of ICH preservation is shaped by various factors, ranging from individual engagement to societal and historical influences. By recognizing the interplay between individual engagement, group dynamics, organizational practices, and the cultural and historical context, we gain a more comprehensive view of students' perceptions of ICH inheritance.

The findings of this study hold valuable implications for educators, policymakers, and cultural heritage preservationists. Educators can use this knowledge to design educational programs that foster a deeper appreciation of ICH among university students. Policymakers can utilize these insights to formulate policies that prioritize the preservation of cultural heritage within educational institutions and beyond. Cultural heritage preservationists can engage with students and educational institutions to raise awareness about the significance of ICH and the need for its protection. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on ICH. Through collaborative efforts, we can ensure the continuity and vitality of ICH, making it a lasting legacy for our shared humanity.

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