



# Awareness and Appreciation for Japanese Culture of Filipino High School Students

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## ABSTRACT

One of the topics discussed in Grade 8 MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health) introduces Japanese culture through music and arts. This study aims to understand high school students' awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture, which strongly influences Philippine pop culture. A descriptive correlation from a survey showed high awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture, particularly in their interest in and support for Japanese art and music, which are anchored in cultural expressions. Japanese products, such as clothing, crafts, and landscapes, were found to incur less awareness and appreciation. Meanwhile, sex is found to have no relationship to awareness and appreciation for Japanese culture. Findings implied that Filipino high school students were exposed to Japanese culture through effective teaching strategies and activities in MAPEH, particularly through discussions of music and the arts. To improve awareness and appreciation of Japanese crafts, clothing, and landscapes, it is suggested that this be included as part of the performances and/or in the discussion of Japanese arts.

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## Introduction

The Philippines and Japan shared a common history since the mid-14th century, which flourished into cultural exchange between the two countries. This historical background of the two countries resulted in an Asian fusion that transcends into various aspects of cultural blending, reflected in the arts and music. In definition, a culture is the shared knowledge and diverse characteristics of a group of people belonging to a society with a distinct language, beliefs, traditions, social norms, and practices, including arts and music (Zimmerman, 2017).

Japan has culturally influenced Philippine arts and music, as is evident among Filipinos, who are drawn to anime and manga. The cultural fusion was also embedded in the enhanced Philippine educational system, specifically in the subject MAPEH. In the Grade 8 level, the subject MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, Health) introduces Japanese culture through arts and music under the K to 12 curriculum. This inclusion in the academic discussion exposed the learners to traditional Japanese arts and music, which are distinct aspects of culture.

The Philippine Cultural Statistics Framework (PCSF), established in 2009, is a localized counterpart to the UNESCO Framework on Cultural Statistics and serves to guide and measure the state of culture and the arts in the country. This led to the Department of Education in the Philippines' program to enhance teaching music and the arts in Grades 7-10, which aims to contribute to the development of individuality and collective identities (DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2012). The curriculum was designed to relate music and the arts to the influence of foreign history and culture, and to associate the impact of technology with globalization. Since the researcher has personal experience in teaching Grade 8 MAPEH, Japanese culture was introduced. The lesson discussed is about East Asian music and arts, which focuses on Japanese folk songs such as *Sakura* that contain traditional melodies of Japan's musical instruments, such as aerophones and membranophones. And Japanese cultural art forms such as traditional Japanese makeup, Kuma Dori used by the Kabuki theater artists, Origami (traditional paper folding), Ikebana (traditional flower arrangement), and the tea ceremony, were introduced and discussed.

This led to the measurement of the implication of culture on the development of communities by collecting statistical data to determine the state of culture in the country through the implementation of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) in partnership with the Plan/Policy Formulation and Programming Division (PPFD) in 2016. According to Mercado (2018), art appreciation and understanding begin with awareness. In addition, Desirazu (2019) and Postma (2018) emphasized the importance of art appreciation, which helps develop open-mindedness in learners by fostering understanding of different perspectives. Guadalupe et al. (2023) identified music as an essential part of education, whether informal, originating from family traditions and community practices, or formal, discussed in school, or non-formal, from modern-day studios. Due to the rapid growth and advancement of technology in the home environment, instructional strategies and vocational anticipation are required. Gula et.al (2022) found less value and appreciation for traditional arts and music.

In the study by Tabuena et al. (2022), students' exposure to Philippine culture was examined and found to be highly valued. Based on this finding, the study aimed to examine how Filipino high school students appreciate foreign cultures. To describe the level of awareness and appreciation, the study was grounded in Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC, 1997). Initially, this theory measures social groups' awareness of stereotypes by incorporating authentic materials such as reading texts, music,

and others. In a recent study, Hoff (2025) points to the evolution of ICC that suits the teaching and learning in today's generation. However, in the present study, it still remained embedded to the ICC (1997) framework, wherein skills and discovery in the model were described as the ability to learn new knowledge of a culture and practices. Thus, the study primarily focuses on the awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture among Filipino high school students, which was part of their MAPEH curriculum. Since Japanese culture is visibly influential on Philippine pop culture, the findings of the study will provide insight into Filipino youth's awareness and appreciation of foreign culture.

## Research Questions

1. To what extent are Filipino high school students aware of Japanese culture?
2. To what extent do Filipino high school students appreciate learning Japanese culture?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the sex of the student-respondents and the level of awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture?

## Methodology

This study applied the quantitative research design employing a descriptive survey technique of 65 Grade 8 student-respondents composed of twenty-seven (27) males and thirty-eight (38) females enrolled in School Year 2024-2025 at a reputable high school located at Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, that has a connection to other institutions in Japan. This grade level covers East Asian music and arts in MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, Health), with a portion of the discussion focusing on Japanese culture. To discuss the matter, the study describes the level of awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture and its significant relationship to the sex of the student-respondents. A complete enumeration sampling method was used for the small population of grade 8 students in the selected school due to the limited sample size and the limitations on generalizability. The main instrument employed to gather the necessary data was an adapted survey questionnaire from the study by Diaz et al. (2024), which measured students' awareness and appreciation of the local heritage of Surigao City in the Philippines. The instrument was modified for each item to fit the needs of the new study on students' awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture, and its content reliability and construct validity were evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha (1957), which yielded an acceptable internal consistency of 0.82 (82%). The gathered data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage, means and standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients ( $r$ ), and effect sizes. The researcher assessed the level of awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture through music and the arts among Filipino high school students, as well as the current condition and the correlation between sex and level of awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture. At a 95% confidence level, the interval was  $20.6 \pm 0.778$ , indicating the possible values of the population mean. The

confidence level indicates the reliability of the estimated procedure, but not the degree of certainty that the computed confidence interval contains the actual value of the parameter being studied. It only shows the proportion of confidence intervals that include the true value of the parameter from an infinite number of intervals.

## Results and Discussion

This study examined the awareness and appreciation of Japanese Culture among Filipino high school students who were taught in the subject MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, Health), with a focus on East Asian culture, specifically the arts and music of Japan.

### *Extent of Awareness of High School Students on Japanese Culture*

The findings (Table 1) reveal a high level of awareness of Japanese culture, with an overall mean score of 3.86 (SD = 0.14), interpreted as “Fully Aware.” Respondents showed the highest understanding of their interest in and support for Japanese art, music, and cultural expressions (M = 3.95, SD = 0.21) and of Japanese social norms, manners, and etiquette (M = 3.94, SD = 0.24). Meanwhile, the lowest awareness was observed regarding adherence to traditional Japanese clothing (M = 3.74, SD = 0.51), which also exhibited the most significant variability.

**Table 1**

*Level of Awareness of Japanese Culture*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I know how to speak and understand Nihonggo language.	3.85	0.40	Fully Aware
I attend Japanese cultural events, festivals, or celebration of Japanese cultural traditions.	3.92	0.27	Fully Aware
I have knowledge of the Japanese history, folklore, customs, and traditions.	3.91	0.29	Fully Aware
I observe and respect the traditional customs and rituals of Japan.	3.83	0.38	Fully Aware
I adhere to the traditional clothing or attire that can be an outward expression of cultural awareness.	3.74	0.51	Fully Aware
I enjoy eating and am familiar with the Japanese cuisine.	3.80	0.40	Fully Aware
I am interested in and support Japanese art, music, dance, and other cultural expressions.	3.95	0.21	Fully Aware
I am aware of Japanese social norms, manners, and etiquettes.	3.94	0.24	Fully Aware
I support in preserving and promoting Japanese inspired museums, sites, and cultural institutions.	3.89	0.31	Fully Aware
I participate in cultural education programs and workshops to learn more about the Japanese culture.	3.78	0.41	Fully Aware
Overall Awareness	3.86	0.14	Fully Aware

Legend: 3.25 - 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA), 2.50 - 3.24 Moderately Agree (MA), 1.75 - 2.49 Slightly Agree (SLA), 1.00 - 1.74 Disagree (D)

Despite this, the overall responses were consistent, reflecting a comprehensive understanding and awareness of Japanese culture. This affirms the impact of the DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2012, the teaching of music and the arts to Grades 7-10, contributing to personal development by relating music and the arts to history and culture around the world.

The results correspond to the following studies of Mercado (2018), Postma (2018), and Desirazu (2019) that art appreciation begins with awareness, which helps in the development of openness, tolerance, and understanding, and to Guadalupe et.al (2023), which identified that music is essential in nurturing cultural traditions. Kurusu (2023) highlights the long history of Japanese language education in the country, noting pivotal milestones in many Japanese cultural events. This helps the ongoing increasing interest in learning Japanese culture among Filipinos. Benigno and Tayag (2014) also identify the primary factor that leads Filipino youths to be aware of Japanese culture: the influence of popular anime and manga. Although they are also informed and aware of the impacts of World War II in the Philippines, Filipino youth still showed a strong interest in viewing Japanese culture positively, deepening their participation in cosplay as fans of anime and manga.

This means that teaching strategies in the subject MAPEH, with a discussion of East Asian music and arts focused on Japan, have an essential influence on the awareness of Filipino high school students of Japanese culture. This was reflected in the highest indicator, which shows Filipino high school students' interest in Japanese art, music, dance, and other cultural expressions. However, low adherence to Japanese traditional clothing, an outward expression of cultural awareness, was also observed during class discussion due to the unavailability of the actual "*kimono*," the conventional cloth or attire in Japan.

### ***Extent of Appreciation of High School Students on Japanese Culture***

The results in Table 2 indicate a strong appreciation for Japanese culture, with an overall mean score of 3.93 (SD = 0.12), interpreted as "Strongly Appreciative." Respondents showed the highest gratitude for being interested in reading about Japanese culture (M = 3.98, SD = 0.12) and exploring literature that provides profound insights into Japanese history and values (M = 3.97, SD = 0.25). Similarly, they expressed significant appreciation for traditional Japanese performances (M = 3.97, SD = 0.17). While all indicators reflect strong appreciation, relatively lower scores were observed for purchasing Japanese crafts and products (M = 3.85, SD = 0.48) and appreciating Japan's natural landscapes (M = 3.83, SD = 0.45).

Similar to the study by Tabuena et al. (2022), Filipino high school students have a strong appreciation for Philippine culture. The findings also indicate a high level of appreciation for Japanese culture, which has unique and fascinating characteristics that make it easy to appreciate. From the art of *origami* (paper folding), *ikebana* (flower arranging), and *kumadori* (traditional Japanese makeup) to the singing of *Sakura*, a traditional Japanese song, these are everyday classroom activities in the subject MAPEH. The indicator for reading Japanese culture yielded the highest level of appreciation among Filipino high school students, due

Table 2

*Level of Appreciation of Japanese Culture*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I learned a lot regarding the Japanese culture in our subject MAPEH 8.	3.95	0.21	Strongly Appreciative
I have learned significant knowledge about Japanese culture.	3.95	0.21	Strongly Appreciative
I am interested in reading Japanese culture.	3.98	0.12	Strongly Appreciative
I listened carefully while my teachers shared the Japanese cultural traditions.	3.95	0.21	Strongly Appreciative
I explore literature about Japan that provides profound insights into history, values, and perspectives of a culture.	3.97	0.25	Strongly Appreciative
I watch traditional Japanese performances that embody the essence of a culture.	3.97	0.17	Strongly Appreciative
I purchase Japanese crafts and products.	3.85	0.48	Strongly Appreciative
I am mindful of cultural norms and customs by showing respect for Japanese traditions.	3.91	0.38	Strongly Appreciative
I visit museums and historical sites to understand the cultural and historical context of Japan.	3.92	0.32	Strongly Appreciative
I appreciate the local environment and natural landscapes of Japan.	3.83	0.45	Strongly Appreciative
Overall Appreciation	3.93	0.12	Strongly Appreciative

Legend: 3.25 - 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA), 2.50 - 3.24 Moderately Agree (MA), 1.75 - 2.49 Slightly Agree (SLA), 1.00 - 1.74 Disagree (D)

to their exposure to *manga* or *anime*. The findings imply that Filipino high school students appreciate Japanese culture as it provides them with expansive imagination through reading *manga* that presents various Japanese arts. Since it was also part of the discussion in the subject MAPEH, appreciation for Japanese culture was strengthened and formed. The results regarding the level of appreciation are consistent with those of Docot (2006), who affirms the cultural appreciation among Filipinos of Japanese culture. Lydia (2012) traced this cultural appreciation through the historical relationship between Japan and the Philippines, in which cultural exchange was showcased in music and the arts. The study by Cattien and Stanford (2023) consistently defines Filipino artistic appreciation through an extensive exploration of existing culture. Thus, Japanese culture remains embedded in Filipino pop culture through the infinite influence of *manga*, which resonates with it (Cruz et al., 2024).

**Relationship Between the Students' Sex and the Level of Awareness and Appreciation to the Japanese culture**

The results in Table 3 indicate that sex has no meaningful or significant relationship with levels of awareness and appreciation of Japanese culture, as measured by Pearson's correlation. For awareness, the correlation coefficient ( $A = -.074$ ) shows a very weak negative relationship, and the p-value ( $B = .556$ ) confirms this is not statistically significant. Similarly, for appreciation, the correlation coefficient ( $a = .106$ ) indicates a very weak positive relationship, but the p-value ( $B = .401$ ) again shows it is not statistically significant. The findings imply that sex doesn't affect the perception and acceptance of Filipino high school students because of their exposure to *anime* and *manga* at an early age, which serves as an introduction to Japanese culture. This foundation created a faster assimilation of Japanese art and music, which was also discussed in the subject MAPEH.

**Table 3**

*Relationship of Respondents' Sex to their Levels of Awareness and Appreciation of Japanese Culture.*

Awareness		Appreciation	
A	B	A	B
-.074	.556	.106	.401

A = Pearson's correlation. B = level of significance

**Table 4**

*Effect Size to the Levels of Awareness and Appreciation of Japanese Culture.*

Awareness	Appreciation
Cohen's $d = (M_2 - M_1) / SD_{pooled}$	Cohen's $d = (M_2 - M_1) / SD_{pooled}$
$SD_{pooled} = \sqrt{((SD_1^2 + SD_2^2) / 2)}$	$SD_{pooled} = \sqrt{((SD_1^2 + SD_2^2) / 2)}$
Cohen's $d = (3.8526 - 3.8741) / 0.143469$ = 0.149858.	Cohen's $d = (3.9395 - 3.9148) / 0.119339$ = 0.206974.

Table 4 presents a small effect size, indicating limited practical applicability to the level of awareness and appreciation among Filipino high school students of Japanese culture. This result might be statistically significant, but its impact and meaning are too small to make it useful in practice. The findings suggest a broader scope of Filipino high school students exposed to Japanese culture, as the present study was limited to the area, class size, and the criterion of having a connection to a Japanese institution.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Japanese traditions and culture have an interesting and distinct identity that makes it influential to other foreign countries like the Philippines. The introduction of *manga* as a medium for showcasing Japanese culture exposed Filipino high school students to different forms of Japanese, specifically music and the arts. Through this, the assimilation of foreign culture was easily adopted and accepted by the Filipino students, which was strengthened by the Department of Education through DepEd Order No. 31. In 2012, the program was enhanced to teach music and arts to Grades 7-10 to contribute to personal development by relating music and arts to history and culture around the world. Thus, Filipino high school students were found to be aware of and appreciate Japanese culture because of the additional information provided by the subject called MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health), which covers East Asian music and arts. Although the result might be statistically significant, its impact and meaning are too small to be useful in practice in the field of education. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that further studies with larger scope be conducted, compared to the present. And to improve the awareness and appreciation to Japanese traditional clothing or *kimono* and Japanese crafts and natural landscapes, it is suggested to include in the discussion, activities, or performance tasks in East Asian music and arts in the subject MAPEH.



## Statement of Declarations

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### Disclosure Statement

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

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## Ethical Approval

In gathering the data, consent was approved by the Schools Division of Science City of Munoz and endorsed to the School Principals of selected high schools in Science City of Munoz, Nueva Ecija, before administering the research instruments to the student-respondents. For ethical considerations, the consent of the student-respondents was communicated correctly to their respective advisers and parents. The researcher personally distributed the instruments during the student-respondents' free time with the assistance from other MAPEH teachers to ensure success in the administration and retrieval.

## Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

During the preparation of this work, the author did not use any AI tools or services. This declaration does not apply to basic tools for checking grammar, spelling, references, etc.

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