

The Impact of Cultural Identity on Ethnic Minority People's Ability to Sustainably Escape Poverty: A Case Study of the Muong People in Thanh Hoa, Vietnam

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ABSTRACTS

Analyze the influence of cultural identity on the Muong people's ability to escape poverty sustainably in Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam under an interdisciplinary approach. Survey of 400 representatives of Muong households in 3 mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa province, qualitative research on documents related to the cultural identity of Muong people in Vietnam. Research to describe, and analyze the cultural identities of the Muong people, regression analysis of the influence of the cultural identities of the Muong people on the ability of the Muong people to escape poverty sustainably in Thanh Hoa, Vietnam, thence provides solutions to improve the ability of Muong people to escape poverty sustainably from the perspective of cultural heritage. The study concludes that cultural identity is a valuable heritage and a significant driving force for the sustainable economic development of ethnic minorities in Thanh Hoa.

Keywords: *cultural identity, ethnic minorities, sustainable livelihoods, Thanh Hoa, Viet Nam*

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1. Introduction

Muong people in Vietnam are most concentrated in Hoa Binh province accounting for 42%, and neighboring provinces such as Thanh Hoa 29%, Phu Tho 15%, Son La 6%, Ninh Binh 4%, Hanoi 0.13%. The remaining regions account for 3.9% of the Muong population, according to the results of the 2019 census, the population of the Muong ethnic group is 1,452,095 people, the second largest ethnic minority in Vietnam (General Statistics Office, 2020). As an ethnic group with thousands of years of history in the, and of Vietnam, in addition to social structures, and organizations, the Muong people have created their own culture (Luong et al., 2007). Many Muong cultural products or values have long been famous near and far, such as the Muong language, festivals, behavioral patterns, family relationships, clans, and villages of the Muong people, which are incredibly intimate.

Like all cultures, Muong culture is constantly evolving. Historically, interactions with other Vietnamese ethnic groups have shaped Muong traditions. Since 1986, industrialization, modernization, and globalization have accelerated these changes, particularly in Thanh Hoa, a region with significant cultural exchange. This has led to a

complex situation where the Muong both enrich their culture through outside influences and experience a loss of traditional identity.

Thanh Hoa province recognizes the challenge of preserving cultural identity while promoting economic development, especially for ethnic minorities. Their commitment to sustainable development and poverty reduction is evident in Resolution 09/NQ-TU, which aims to empower impoverished households to improve their livelihoods and reduce the economic gap between mountainous areas and other regions. This approach highlights the province's dedication to economic growth and cultural heritage preservation in the face of globalization.

The Muong people are significant in Thanh Hoa province, making up almost 59% of the ethnic minority population. They are concentrated in districts like Ngoc Lac, Thach Thanh, and Ba Thuoc. Their settlements in the low mountainous areas are strategically located near productive land and roads, facilitating their traditional livelihoods of wet rice cultivation, shifting cultivation, and livestock farming. This combination of agricultural practices reflects their adaptation to the local environment and their resourcefulness in ensuring their subsistence.

Thanh Hoa is a land rich in culture with many ethnic minorities living together. This place has majestic natural landscapes and a diverse cultural treasure, which can realize stilt house architecture, jade costumes, and traditional festivals. Realizing the great potential of this cultural heritage, ethnic minorities in Thanh Hoa have been exploiting their exclusive cultural values, turning them into a driving force for sustainable economic development; the symbolic standard is community information. However, the exploitation and promotion of cultural identity also face many difficulties, such as the risk of commercialization, lack of resources, and business skills.

Therefore, support from the government and social organizations is vital, including business skills training, market access, and policies to protect and promote cultural values. Practice in Thanh Hoa shows that cultural identity is not only a valuable heritage that needs to be preserved but also an important resource for economic development. By harnessing it creatively and responsibly, cultural identity can become a solid foundation for a sustainable future, where economic development goes hand in hand with preserving and promoting traditional cultural values.

2. Overview

The Muong ethnic group has an important position and role in the community of 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam and is the third most populous ethnic group (after Kinh, Tay, and Thai) in the total population of the country (General Statistics Office, 2020). Therefore, the Muong ethnic group has received research attention from many domestic scholars, in many different forms such as monographs, ministerial-level scientific research topics, published articles, dissertations, PhD...

Foreign scholars have shown interest in Vietnam's Muong people since the French colonial period. Early works by authors like C. Chéon and P. Grossin described the geographic and general characteristics of the Muong. Jeanne Cuisinier's "Muong People - Human Geography and Sociology" provided a comprehensive overview of Muong society and culture, though her reliance on the intellectual class may have presented a limited perspective. This work is still considered a valuable resource on traditional Muong cultural values. Other researchers like Milton and Barker focused on specific aspects of Muong culture, such as language and architecture, with works like "Muong Phonemes" and "House Construction of the Muong People".

The research of Ethnological Institutes is concentrated in the book “*Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam*” (Ethnological Research, 1982). Among those who are especially dedicated to this topic, Nguyen Ngoc Thanh is the one who has spent much time, and effort and has had many published works, including “*Muong People in Tan Lac, Hoa Binh*” (Nguyen et al., 2003). The book mentions people, nature, economic life, culture, traditional customs, and practices of the Muong people in Tan Lac.

In particular, author Bui Tuyet Mai has presented quite elaborately, and uniquely about the Muong people through the photo books “*The Muong People in Vietnam*”, and “*The Muong People in the L, and of Hung King's Ancestors*” (Bui et al., 1999). Through more than 100 photos that have been selected, and arranged according to an interdisciplinary approach, focusing on the relationship between culture, history, and era, it has provided readers with a relatively complete understanding. enough about the Muong people in Vietnam with their unique lifestyle, customs, and cultural traditions.

In 2004, Thanh Hoa Province published the book Thanh Hoa Geography, this is a work that comprehensively covers aspects of the economic, political, cultural-social life, and medical education of ethnic groups living in Hoa Binh province such as Kinh, Muong, Thai, Dao, and But. Also following this direction, the book Muong Ethnicity again outlines the basic features of the history, and life of the Muong people such as origin, residence, organization, and traditional culture with festival beliefs... Focusing on the historical aspect of the Muong people, there are Outstanding research by Vuong Hoang Tuyen with the work Underst, anding the historical origin of the Muong people, Nguyen Luong Bich In history, the Vietnamese, and Muong people are two peoples or one people (Nguyen et al., 1974).

Research on the political and social relationships of the Muong people has many research works on land relations in the Lang Dao regime, typically Nguyen Duong Binh, and Tran Quoc Vuong with Some comments on the Muong - Viet relationship and the differentiation process between the Muong and Viet ethnic groups (Tran et al., 1970); Mac Duong with Society and land in the Muong region before the August Revolution; Nguyen Duong Binh with Some features of the social situation in the Muong region in Vinh Phuc province before the August Revolution; Tran Tu with Contributing additional field documents on the Lang regime: around the forms of exploiting Lang fields. These studies have mentioned the origin, settlement process, and social organization of a part of the Muong people, land and land classification, outlined the social organization model, and relationships between people in Muong society.

In addition, looking back over the history of research on the Muong people and Muong culture, we can also mention many works whose names have shown a general view, for example, Documents on the Muong people in the Viet region and the image of Tan Vien in the cultural life of the Muong people by Lam Ba Nam; A few things about Muong culture by Tran Quoc Vuong (Tran et al., 1996); from the issue of the Vietnamese-Muong language, Contributing to the study of the origin of the Muong people by Pham Duc Duong, etc.

Tran Tu, a prominent ethnologist, conducted in-depth research on the Muong people by immersing himself in a relatively isolated Muong community. His focus on individuals untouched by Confucian influence allowed him to study authentic Muong society and its relationship with the Kinh people. His notable works, including “The World of Life and the World of Death in the Concept of the Muong People” and “Muong People in Hoa Binh”, explore Muong’s spiritual life, social relations, and land ownership. Tran Tu’s detailed accounts of traditional Muong society, customs, and

beliefs have clarified critical aspects of their culture and history. His work, particularly “Muong Cosmology”, has earned him recognition as a leading expert on the Muong people, especially in France.

Recent research on the Muong people has delved deeper into specific aspects of their culture. Linguistic studies, such as Nguyen Van Khang and Bui Chi’s “Muong - the Vietnamese Dictionary” and Nguyen Van Tai’s work on Muong phonetics, highlight the unique characteristics of the Muong language and its reflection of their values of respect, love, and solidarity. Furthermore, publications like “Muong People with Traditional Muong Bi Culture” and “Muong ethnic culture of Kim Boi District” offer comprehensive insights into Muong customs, practices, and local knowledge, including birth rituals, weddings, funerals, and economic activities. These studies also provide valuable comparisons of Muong cultural practices across different regions.

Many researchers have dedicated themselves to understanding the customs and practices of the Muong people. Duong Ha Hieu, for instance, provides a thorough account of Muong wedding customs in Thanh Son district in his work “Wedding customs of the Muong people in Thanh Son district, Phu Tho”. However, Nguyen Ngoc Thanh stands out with his comprehensive research on the Muong family and marriage in Phu Tho province. In “Family and Marriage of the Muong in Phu Tho Province”, he paints a vivid picture of Muong customs, lifestyle, and family dynamics, including marriage principles, family structure, and relationships between members. He also explores the historical relationship between the Viet and Muong people and touches upon changes in Muong family life across different regions. Nguyen Ngoc Thanh has further contributed to the field through numerous journal articles on ethnology, folklore, and archaeology, such as “Some Notes on Traditional Wedding Ceremonies of the Muong People”.

Research on Muong beliefs and spiritual life adds another layer to understanding their culture. Scholars like Dang Van Lung, Bui Thien, and Bui Van Ngoi have focused on Mo Muong (Muong shamanistic rituals) and funeral practices, providing detailed accounts of Mo Ang (shamanic verses) and their significance in these rituals. Dinh Van An’s compilation of “Mo - The Road to Heaven”, presented in Vietnamese and Muong languages, offers further insights into Muong funeral processes. Bui Thi Kim Phuc delves into the role of Mo rituals in Muong spiritual life, examining the belief system, the position of the shaman, and their influence on the community. While these works illuminate the richness of Muong spiritual life, they lack detailed descriptions of specific procedures, rituals, and their deeper meanings within funerals and the broader spiritual context.

A representative of the research trend on Muong cultural transformation is Luong Quynh Khue with Traditional Muong cultural identity and current transformation trends - Through a survey of Muong culture in Hoa Binh province (Ministry-level project, code B06-27, 2008) (Luong et al., 2008). Here, the author has provided insights into some basic characteristics of traditional culture in terms of material economy as well as the spiritual life of the Muong people through the perspective of Ethnology and Cultural Studies. The author also forecasts the transformation trend of Muong culture in the face of integration trends and recommendations to preserve and develop Muong culture. This work also mentioned some systems of material and spiritual cultural values of the traditional Muong people and forecasted their transformation trends. Also in this trend, Le Hai Dang in Family Rituals of the Tay Muong in Con Cuong, Nghe An, systematically presented family rituals, thereby clarifying the cultural characteristics of

the Muong people here; pointing out the changes in family rituals of the Tay Muong people and the causes affecting those changes.

This study goes beyond describing Muong culture by analyzing community cohesion through their traditional social organization. Nguyen Thi Thanh Nga's "Traditional Culture of Some Ethnic Groups in Hoa Binh" provides a broader perspective by examining the cultural expressions of other ethnic groups in the region, such as the H'mong and Thai, highlighting each group's unique identity. Nguyen Thi Song Ha's "Rituals in the Life Cycle of the Muong People in Hoa Binh" offers a comparative analysis of Muong life cycle rituals across different locations. It also examines the evolution of these rituals, tracing their transformation from traditional to modern forms. The study identifies the drivers of change and provides recommendations for preserving these cultural values in the face of modernization. This comprehensive work underscores the dynamic nature of Muong culture, its adaptability, and its interaction with other communities. By analyzing these rituals, the study reveals the core cultural characteristics of the Muong people in Hoa Binh. It proposes strategies for safeguarding their cultural identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Up to now, there have been hundreds of research works (including articles published in domestic and foreign professional and non-professional scientific journals) with content approaching the Muong people in terms of language, ethnic origin, demography, economic development, beliefs, marriage, kinship, historical figures, education, culture, etc, and many other aspects. The research angle also originates from the fields of Linguistics, History, and Cultural Studies and extends to the fields of Ethnology, Sociology, Medicine, Communication, etc. Scholars' research also begins to conduct fieldwork, collect new documents, discover new issues, and put forward new ideas, contributing significantly to promoting the comprehensive development of the Muong people in Vietnam.

3. Theoretical framework and research methods

3.1. Theoretical framework

This study combines the DFID Sustainability Fellows (SLF) theoretical framework and Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital theory to analyze the ecological planning of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa. The SLF provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the factors influencing ecological planning, including income and access to energy resources, resilience, and improved quality of life. Five types of capital - human, social, natural, physical, and financial - are the pillars of sustainable livelihoods. However, cultural capital must be considered critically to understand the Muong people's ecological planning better. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital includes knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and other cultural expressions. It is not only a part of social capital but also interacts and influences other types of capital, contributing to sustainable development. The Muong people in Thanh Hoa possess a rich cultural heritage, including traditional knowledge of agriculture, forestry, traditional medicine, handicraft skills, language, arts, and exclusive customs. This valuable cultural capital has great potential to provide sustainable livelihood services.

Therefore, the cultural capital of the Muong people interacts with other types of capital in the SLF along the edges: Traditional knowledge of agriculture, such as wet rice cultivation techniques on terraced fields, helps the Muong people sustainably use land and water resources. They know how to choose suitable rice varieties, rotate crops,

and use natural pest control measures, contributing to protecting the ecological environment.

Traditional handicraft skills, such as brocade weaving, weaving, and forging, are used by the Muong people to create unique products with high economic value. These products are sold in local markets, souvenir shops, or through e-commerce channels, generating income for the people. In particular, with the development of community tourism, tourists are increasingly interested in handicrafts and cultural experiences, opening up opportunities to increase income for the Muong people. For example, in Lac village (Mai et al.), the Muong people have organized homestays and cultural experience tours, helping them increase their income significantly by selling products and providing accommodation and food services.

Community cultural activities such as festivals, rituals, and dissemination of teaching knowledge help preserve cultural identity and strengthen social cohesion, build trust, and support each other in the community. For example, the Muong people's "Xuong Dong" festival allows the community to pray together for a bountiful harvest, strengthening the relationship between the village and its neighbors.

By integrating culture into the sustainable livelihoods theoretical framework, this study will provide a comprehensive view of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa using their cultural heritage to build sustainable plans. From there, appropriate support solutions and policies will be proposed to help the community develop the economy, preserve culture, and improve the quality of life.

3.2. Research methods

This study uses a combination of document analysis and direct interview methods to investigate the impact of cultural identity on the Muong people's ability to escape poverty sustainably in Thanh Hoa.

Document analysis method: The study uses document analysis to restore history and analyze the cultural context. The author takes the Doi Moi period (1986) as the starting point, combined with an analysis of the political and social situation of the whole country, to divide the cultural transformation of the Muong people into stages and analyze the content of each stage. The documents used include research works on the history and culture of the Muong people, local socio-economic development policies, and related statistical reports.

Direct interview method using questionnaires: The study conducted direct interviews with 400 Muong households in 3 districts of Thach Thanh, Ngoc Lac, and Ba Thuoc of Thanh Hoa province. These areas have a sizeable Muong population and are considered the cradle of Muong Thanh Hoa culture.

Sample selection: The total number of Muong households in the three selected districts is 9,226. To ensure a reliability of 99.7% and an error of no more than 3%, the study used the non-replicated sample calculation formula. It determined the sample size to be 400 households, including 214 females (53.5%) and 186 males (46.5%). Each questionnaire was for a representative of the households in the research community. Because the number of households in each survey area was not significantly different, the survey samples were distributed equally to each area.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Related concepts and cultural identity of the Muong people

4.1.1. Related Concepts

Concept of cultural capital: “Cultural capital is the set of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that an individual acquires and uses to enhance his or her social status”. (Bourdieu, 1986). It includes tangible elements such as degrees and assets and intangible elements such as knowledge, language, values, and habits.

Forms of cultural capital:

Embodied cultural capital: “The enduring characteristics of an individual’s body and mind, such as skills, language, style, and tastes”. (Sullivan, 2001).

Institutionalized cultural capital: “The formal recognition of an individual’s cultural capital, such as academic degrees and certificates”. (Bourdieu, 1986).

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The concept of sustainable poverty reduction: “Sustainable poverty reduction is the process by which individuals and households escape poverty and maintain a standard of living above the poverty line over an extended period”. (World Bank, 2018). It is about increasing income and improving access to education, health care, housing, and other essential social services.

The concept of ethnic minorities: “Ethnic minorities are groups of people who share a distinct ethnic identity and are often economically, socially and politically disadvantaged compared to the majority ethnic group”. (UN, 2007).

Muong people: “The Muong people are one of the largest ethnic minorities in Vietnam, with a rich history and culture. They live mainly in the northern mountainous region and have a tradition of wet rice agriculture”. (Institute of Ethnology, 2009).

4.1.2. Cultural Identity of the Muong People

* The formation and development process of the Muong people

The Muong are an ethnic minority, the second largest population in Northern Vietnam after the Tay. The name “Muong” has now become a popular name used to refer to a specific ethnic group (the Muong ethnic group), but that name is not satisfactory. According to the ethnographic principle, one must call a certain ethnic group by its self-proclaimed name. In folklore and daily life, the Muong people call themselves Mol (or Mon, Mwon, Mwal, Mul, Moi... depending on local differences), which means “people”. In the past, in Vietnamese, there were also the words Moi and Moi Ro to refer to ethnic minorities, in which Moi is the self-proclaimed name of the Muong people, and the name Ro or Ru is the word the Muong people often use to refer to the Lu and Thai people. However according to existing documents, since the 17th century, the word Moi or Ke Moi has been used to refer to ethnic minorities in Truong Son and Tay Nguyen (Brief History of Vietnam, vol. II, 12b, 1065).

It is currently impossible to determine when the ethnic name “Muong” used to refer to a specific ethnic group (Muong ethnic group) appeared. It is only known that in the order of the Kinh Luoc of Bac Ky Nguyen Trong Hiep dated June 2 (lunar calendar) of the first year of Dong Khanh (1888), article 1 stated: “Establish a new province including the lands of the ancient Muong people in the provinces of Hung Hoa, Son Tay, Ha Noi, Ninh Binh”. That was the official document of the colonial-feudal state that used the word “Muong” to refer to a certain population. However, in the writings of French

officers and officials at the end of the 19th century, the name Muong was still used arbitrarily to refer to both the Muong and Thai ethnic groups. Before the August Revolution, in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An, there were places where people called both the Thai-Tay and Muong people by the name Muong (Nguyen et al., 1974). In general, since the beginning of the 20th century, in literature and newspapers, the Muong language has been used to refer to a certain population, distinguishing it from the Thai people.

Muong is a Thai word, used by the Thai and Muong people to refer to a region or locality in general. In the works written in Chinese characters by Vietnamese feudal scholars, the word “Muong” is often transcribed as mang. This name first appeared in the book Viet Su Luoc (14th century) and was used many times in Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu and later works, all to refer to a specific locality: for example Muong Viet (now Yen Chau), Muong Mai (now Mai Chau), Muong Le (now Lai Chau), etc. Currently, the Thai people call the Muong people Moi or Mang (Viet et al., vol. II, 12b, 1065).

In the Man Thu of Phan Xuoc of the Tang Dynasty, we see the name Mang (Mang man bo lac) used to refer to a certain group of residents (ethnique group) (Man Thu, vol. IV). The Mang Man people belonged to the Thai ethnic group, in Khai Nam (the Mang Thi and Canh Dong regions of present-day Yunnan province). The book Cuong Muc (19th century) mentioned the Mang Man people in Sam Chau (Cuong et al., vol. XXVII, 20a). Sam Chau is Sam Neua province, now in Upper Laos, the residents there also belong to the Thai ethnic group.

In the popular language, people often refer to people in a certain locality (a muong) (for example, Mói muong Pi = Mường Bi people). Gradually, the name Mường from a word referring to the territory will become a word referring to people (in the Mo songs, there are often the sentences “Chau on binh muong”, “dua Binh dua muong”, “ngươi this, ngươi muong”, “ngươi muong on xa Duong” etc.). Perhaps the word “ngươi Muong” is mainly used by the Vietnamese (Kinh) to refer to the Mối people. That word was initially popular in official works and documents. According to current documents we know, from the 19th century onwards, historical and geographical works by Vietnamese feudal scholars often referred to the Mường people as well as other ethnic minorities such as Man and Lao. That name was originally used by the Han feudalists to refer to the residents of Vietnam (and Southern China) during the Northern domination period, and after the 10th century, it was used by the Vietnamese feudalists to refer to ethnic minorities within the Dai Viet country. That name has racist connotations.

During the French colonial period and recent times, several works have appeared researching the Muong ethnic group and the Muong-Vietnamese relationship. Most researchers believe that the Vietnamese and Muong were originally one people, and they call it “Tien Viet”. The relationship between the Muong and Vietnamese has been studied most thoroughly in linguistics. Linguists J. Przyluski, H. Maspero, A. G. Haudricourt, and others have arranged the Muong and Vietnamese languages into the same group. According to these scholars, the ancient Vietnamese and Muong languages are just one (Tien Viet); the Muong language is a form of ancient Vietnamese or still retains many features of ancient Vietnamese (A.G. Haudricourt, 1953). People often call these two languages by a unified noun, Vietnamese-Muong. Other aspects of the Muong-Vietnamese relationship have been studied relatively sketchily. In terms of anthropology, it is believed that the physicality of the Muong and the Vietnamese is not much different; H. Marneffe and L. Bezacier believe that if the Vietnamese and Muong were not the same late inhabitants, they would have been split into two, it could have

been originally two tribes belonging to the same Pre-Viet anthropological element (H. Marneffe et L. Bezacier, 1940). Ethnologist J.Cuisinier, in his monograph on the Muong people, concluded that the two ethnic groups, Muong and Viet, have the exact origin. In terms of material culture and spiritual culture, there is no significant difference between the Muong and Viet ethnic groups. The difference in daily life is only a minor detail (Cuisinier, 1995). Many Vietnamese historical researchers, based on the study of the folklore language (legends, myths...) of the two Muong and Viet ethnic groups combined with archaeological and ancient historical documents, also advocate that Muong and Viet were originally one: the direct common ancestors of the Muong and Vietnamese people are the Lac Viet people.

The above opinions are generally correct. However, one thing is obvious: Nowadays, Muong and Viet are two different ethnic groups, although they have a close relationship with each other. If the Muong and Viet ethnic groups were originally one, then when did the two ethnic groups separate to become two separate ethnic groups? Moreover, what was the historical cause of that division? Researchers have either not mentioned this issue in the past or have only presented it very briefly. The general opinion that many people accept is that the Vietnamese are Muong people who have been Sinicized, more or less. Some ethnologists believe that Muong and Viet separated around the Ly Dynasty (Lam Tam) or Le Dynasty (XV, Mac Duong). However, the evidence presented is still sketchy and not convincing enough. Recently, there has been an opinion that Muong and Viet have been two different ethnic groups since the Stone Age, two neighboring ethnic groups. The opinion that Muong and Viet were originally one is based only on linguistic criteria and is, therefore, incomplete. Therefore, before studying the historical separation between the Vietnamese and the Muong, we must present a few points about the Muong-Vietnamese relationship.

The Muong people reside on a continuous strip of land from Nghia Lo, Yen Bai, Phu Tho, Son Tay to Hoa Binh, the western part of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An... Currently, the Muong people are not present on the left bank of the Red River. Through field research, the so-called Muong people in the Vinh Yen area are only the Dao people wearing shorts (Bui et al., 1999). The most densely populated area of the Muong people is Hoa Binh province and six districts in the western part of Thanh Hoa. Field investigation documents of many ethnologists and investigation documents of the ethnic department in Nghia Lo, Phu Tho provinces, and the Northwest autonomous region all confirm that an important part, if not most of the Muong people residing in Son Tay, Phu Tho, and Nghia Lo today are initially from Hoa Binh (especially in Muong Bi, so they still call themselves Moi Pi - Moi Bi). They still maintain relationships (travel and visit...) with the Muong people of Hoa Binh. From Hoa Binh, they migrated along the Da River to Van Yen, Phu Yen (Nghia Lo), from Hoa Binh to Son Tay (Bat et al. That, Quoc Oai), or to Thanh Son, Thanh Thuy, Yen Lap (Phu Tho), following Thu Cuc, Lai Dong to Tran Yen, Van Chan, Phu Yen... According to Hung Hoa Xu Phong Tho Luc, from the end of the 18th century (this book was written in 1778), we saw the Muong people present in Thanh Xuyen district (now Thanh Son, Thanh Thuy) Gia Hung prefecture, Tran Yen district, Yen Lap, Van Chan, Van Ban, Quy Hoa prefecture. The Muong people in Quan Hoa, Tho Xuan (Thanh Hoa), also originated from Muong Bi (Hoa Binh), so they and others still call them Moi Bi (Bui et al., 1999). It can be seen that Hoa Binh is the oldest residential area of the Muong people. Their migration trend in ancient history was to move north and partly south along rivers or valleys at the foot of rocky mountain ranges.

However, did the Muong people originally live in Hoa Binh or migrate there elsewhere? That is the problem of the Muong people's origin and the Vietnamese people's origin. As everyone knows, although researchers have tried, that problem has not been resolved. The current widely accepted opinion is that the formation of the Muong people, as well as the Vietnamese people, is the process of harmonization of many anthropological factors migrating from somewhere else (possibly from the North) combined with an indigenous factor. That Indigenous factor could be a Mon-Khmer factor (understood in terms of linguistics), and one of the essential factors added later could be the ancient Thai-Tay factor (or pre-Thai-Tay). We must note that ethnicity is not a race but a historical category formed to integrate many ancient ethnic groups.

*** Muong cultural identity in Vietnamese culture**

The Muong ethnic group is the direct descendant of the Lac Viet people, the owner of the Dong Son culture of the ancient Vietnamese civilization. The Muong cultural identity, therefore, must be recognized from its origin in the continuity, preservation, and development of the national cultural space. From a historical perspective, we can see the relationship between Muong culture and Vietnamese culture as follows:

In prehistoric times, there was no concept of "Muong culture". However, Thanh Hoa was an archaeological cultural area representing a development stage of Vietnamese culture, mainland Southeast Asian culture, and the southern territory of present-day China. That is "Hoa Binh culture", which existed from 18,000 years to 7,500 years ago. The sites found in Hoa Binh mostly have a date frame from 12,000 years to 7,000 years BC - representing the most typical peaceful period (Dao et al., 1958).

"Hoa Binh Culture" developed following "Son Vi Culture" and was the basis for the formation of "Bac Son Culture", the pinnacle of Neolithic culture in prehistoric Vietnam. Through the sites and artifacts found in caves and on ancient river beds in the northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam, it can be seen that there were strong traces of the activities of the ancient people groups - descendants of the Hoa Binh and Bac Son residents. A part remained in the mountainous areas, later becoming the current mountainous ethnic groups; in Hoa Binh, they were the Viet (Muong). Another part followed the rivers down to gradually exploit the Northern Delta and advanced to the coastal plains, later becoming the present Kinh people.

In prehistoric times, the convergence of pre-Dong Son cultures on a large territory, from the current Vietnam-China border to Northern Quang Binh, gave birth to the first state of the ancient Vietnamese residents. That was the Van Lang state of the Hung Kings with the brilliant Dong Son culture, and the next stage was the Au Lac State.

This stage also did not have the concepts of "Kinh" and "Muong". The people who built the Van Lang state, the owners of the Dong Son culture, were ancient Vietnamese people who were recorded in ancient Chinese books as "Lac Viet people" to distinguish them from other Vietnamese ethnic groups living in a large territory south of the Yangtze River at that time (Complete Annals of Dai Viet, 1998). The separation into two groups, "Viet Kinh" and "Viet Muong", only took place during the period of Chinese domination, at the beginning of the independent era about a thousand years ago. This results from the gradual integration of a transformation process that took place over thousands of years under the influence of many cultures outside the Lac Viet people (Complete Annals of Dai Viet, 1998). According to scientists, Dong Son culture continued to exist until the first few centuries AD, then was preserved and continued by the "Viet Muong" group of residents (Complete Annals of Dai Viet, 1998).

According to scientists, Dong Son culture existed until the first few centuries AD, then was preserved and continued by the “Viet Muong” resident group (Complete History of Dai Viet, 1998). The Muong cultural identity provides us with much authentic evidence of this continuity. Many Muong cultural values contain information that shows the continuity of the traditions of Dong Son culture and ancient Vietnamese culture when Dong Son culture was deconstructed in some aspects under the pressure of foreign cultures. That continuity was maintained continuously for several thousand years and is still present today. This statement is demonstrated when studying the Muong calendar, Muong bronze drums, patterns on Muong skirts, Muong Mo...

Thus, the Muong cultural identity is directly inherited from the ancient Vietnamese cultural identity of the Dong Son period, recreated according to the Muong people's perception. That is a unique position of Muong cultural identity in Vietnamese culture. At the same time, Muong cultural identity also shows the unique characteristics of an ethnic culture that has existed for thousands of years; this uniqueness creates an unmistakable appearance of Muong people, culture, and Muong cultural identity in the colorful culture of the Vietnamese ethnic community.

Muong culture and Muong cultural identity show the depth of the origin of ethnic culture. Research on Muong cultural identity has many meanings in studying Vietnamese culture, from tradition to modernity. Here, we can come to a concept of Muong cultural identity as follows: “Muong cultural identity is the unique features expressed in the material and spiritual cultural values that the Muong community has created and accumulated in its history; these values are preserved, passed down through many generations and also move and change with the movement and change of ethnic culture associated with the general development of national culture” (Luong et al., 2008).

With the above concept, to study the traditional Muong cultural identity, the topic has delved into the unique features vividly expressed in the content and form of expression of some typical cultural values such as culinary culture, costume culture, housing culture - architecture, beliefs, customs, Muong folk literature and art, Muong traditional medicine... However, there are areas of Muong culture that the topic does not have enough conditions to delve into and build into separate scientific topics, such as Muong folk games, Muong folk music, and Muong bronze drums. We include these issues. Different content on the topic should be presented reasonably.

4.1.3. The impact of Muong cultural identity on sustainable livelihood development

Cultural capital is crucial in helping people, especially ethnic minority communities, access and effectively use natural and financial capital, build sustainable livelihoods, and improve the quality of life.

Cultural capital and natural capital: The cultural capital of many ethnic minority communities contains a treasure trove of valuable indigenous knowledge about using and protecting natural resources. The Muong people in Thanh Hoa are a typical example. They possess extensive knowledge about valuable medicinal plants in the forest, farming methods suitable for mountainous areas' terrain and climate characteristics, and methods to protect water and land resources. This knowledge is passed down through many generations, helping them exploit resources sustainably, protect the ecological environment, and maintain long-term livelihoods.

Specific example: The Muong people have a tradition of using forest plants to make medicine, saving medical costs, and contributing to conserving valuable genetic resources. They apply traditional farming techniques such as crop rotation, intercropping, and planting cover crops to protect the soil, limit erosion, and increase crop yields. In addition, the Muong people also have strict regulations on protecting upstream forests, limiting indiscriminate deforestation, contributing to protecting domestic water sources, and preventing natural disasters.

Beliefs and customs related to the environment: The cultural capital of many communities is also reflected in beliefs and customs related to protecting the natural environment. For example, some customs involve worshiping forest, mountain, and water gods or avoiding cutting down trees in sacred areas. These cultural factors contribute to forming a sense of respect for nature, raising the responsibility for protecting the environment, limiting the overexploitation of resources, and maintaining ecological balance.

Specific example: The Muong people, attaching worship to forest and water gods, and attaching importance to protecting upstream forests and domestic water sources. They believe that indiscriminate tree cutting and hunting of wild animals will anger the gods, causing disasters for humans. These beliefs have contributed to protecting the forest, creating a clean living environment, and maintaining rich natural resources for future generations.

Cultural capital used in agricultural production: The ecosystem is “cave - -valley”, generalized in the order: stream - alluvial land - valley - ancient terrace - hill ... (Mai Van Tung, 2011) with terrain on the edge of the delta, with transitional forms from high mountains to plains, on river terraces and valley terrain with patches of old forest, sparse forest mixed with patches of grass, close to rivers, streams, and streams favorable for the development of flora and fauna. This is a complex ecosystem, but the Muong people have adapted to their survival.

Wet rice fields are primarily in valleys near rivers, streams, underground water sources, and terraced fields along forest hills. Slash-and-burn cultivation is often on low mountain slopes; in addition to growing upland rice, it also grows tubers such as cassava, corn, and potatoes and fiber plants such as cotton, jute, and hemp... The stick used to poke holes to sow seeds is a typical tool for slash-and-burn cultivation. Traditional agriculture for the Muong people is one-crop cultivation, which depends on nature (planting at the beginning and harvesting at the end of the rainy season). There are many types of rice; traditional rice varieties of the Muong people have low productivity but are also adapted to the environment of the foothills. In Muong villages, women are involved in the weaving profession. The Muong people's weaving technique creates many sophisticated and unique traditional patterns. The weaving profession is mainly carried out during leisure time. The skillful hands of the craftsmen have created several products with aesthetic value, such as rattan pillows and beautiful don (Vuong Anh, 1995).

In addition to agricultural production, the Muong raise livestock and fish, hunt wild animals, and exploit forest products. They mainly raise livestock (buffalo, cows, pigs,

goats, etc.) and poultry (chickens, ducks, livers, geese, etc.) in family units. Traditional poultry breeds of the Muong are often slow-growing, low-yielding but high-quality. Fishing occurs in streams, lakes, ponds, rice fields near lakes, etc. Before 1945, fish farming was not widespread; now, fish farming has developed, especially cage fish farming in rivers and streams, bringing significant profits (Mai Van Tung, 2011). Collecting mollusks such as snails, ears, mussels, and worm-eating worms in streams and lakes is also noticed.

In the past, hunting and trapping wild animals were entirely developed - it protected the Muong village and production... and contributed significantly to increasing food sources. Exploiting forest resources plays a vital role for the Muong people. The forest products in the forest ecosystem are diverse and exploited sustainably by the Muong people. Exploiting raw materials: wood, bamboo, rattan, rattan, bamboo, rattan... to serve the needs of building houses and weaving. In addition, the Muong people also know how to exploit tubers, fruits, and resins to serve the needs of daily life. For the Muong people, the forest is a treasure trove; there may be crop failures, but not “forest crop failures”. During the development process, the Muong people exchanged with other ethnic groups. The cultural exchange of ethnic groups has created conditions for the Muong people to develop and enrich their cultural and spiritual life.

The Muong people's living environment comprises valleys and foothills with diverse, complex terrain. Natural conditions and the environment have many advantages for economic development and cultural activities but pose many challenges that force people to adapt and be creative.

Cultural capital and financial capital:

Social credit and access to credit: Cultural capital, expressed through social relationships, reputation, and trust in the community, can help people, especially ethnic minorities, easily access credit sources. People who actively participate in community activities have prestige, good ethics, and are trusted. They often find it easier to borrow capital from credit institutions, relatives, and friends than those who live in seclusion and have little social interaction.

Specific example: Muong people have a tradition of mutual support in the community. When someone has financial difficulties, they are willing to help in many ways, such as helping with labor, lending rice, money, etc. They also maintain community credit forms such as clans and wards and help each other with capital for business. This helps them overcome financial difficulties, maintain production, and improve their livelihoods.

Financial management skills: Cultural capital includes not only knowledge and beliefs but also practical skills, including financial management, saving, and spending wisely. People who are educated in finance and know accounting and spending management can use capital more effectively, avoid waste, and invest more profitably.

Specific example: Muong people have a tradition of saving and accumulating through raising livestock, poultry, and growing perennial plants, etc. They also have experience allocating spending to essential needs and limiting spending on unnecessary activities. These financial management skills help them use their limited capital effectively, ensure a stable life, and gradually improve their family economy.

Entrepreneurial spirit and the ability to seize opportunities: Cultural capital also includes values, business concepts, the spirit of daring to think and do, creativity, and dynamism. People with this cultural capital are often more sensitive to seizing business opportunities, adapting to the market, and developing new livelihood models.

Specific example: Muong people have a tradition of trading and exchanging goods with other ethnic groups. In the current market economy, many Muong people have promoted this tradition, boldly investing in business activities such as growing fruit trees, raising livestock and poultry on a large scale, opening shops, and providing tourism services. They constantly learn and acquire new knowledge to improve their competitiveness, develop their family economy, and contribute to the community.

Cultural capital plays a vital role in connecting and effectively promoting other capital sources, contributing to the sustainable livelihoods of people, especially ethnic minorities. Preserving and promoting cultural capital, combined with support policies on natural and financial capital, will create favorable conditions for people to develop the economy, improve their lives, and sustainably escape poverty.

4.2. The Impact of Cultural Capital on Sustainable Livelihood Development

The Muong have great potential to expand their livelihoods, from developing cultural and ecological tourism based on their unique identity and diverse natural landscapes to enhancing the value of agricultural and forestry products through technology and branding. In addition, developing traditional crafts, investing in education and training, and encouraging start-ups and innovation also opens up many new opportunities.

Index	Medium	Standard deviation
Average income per capita (million VND/month)	1.9	0.9
Percentage of households with stable jobs (%)	65.0	15.0
Food security score (scale 1-5)	3.2	1.1
Number of years maintaining traditional craftsmanship	8.5	5.2
Number of times participating in cultural festivals/year	2.3	1.6
Traditional cultural knowledge score (scale 1-10)	6.8	2.3

Results of analyzing survey data for research topic 2023

Table 1. Livelihood status and cultural capital of Muong ethnic households

Quantitative results show that the average income per capita is still low (VND 1.9 million/month), the rate of households with stable jobs is only 65%, and the average food security score is 3.2/5. This is demonstrated through the people's sharing in the interviews: "Here, farming is just enough to eat..." (Bui Van H.), "I want to learn sewing, but there are no classes here..." (Le et al. et al.), "Last year there were many storms and rains, the rice crop failed..." (Pham Thi L.). The Muong people need support to diversify their livelihoods, access vocational training, apply science and technology to production, and improve their competitiveness.

Although the Muong people still maintain traditional cultural activities, as shown by the number of years they have maintained their crafts (8.5 years) and the level of participation in festivals, some crafts are gradually disappearing ("Brocade weaving... now few people buy..." - Ms. Ha Thi M.) and teaching the younger generation is difficult ("I want to teach my son to weave, but he does not like it..." - Mr. Nguyen Van Q.).

Therefore, policies should support the development of community cultural tourism, creating conditions for the Muong people to promote their crafts while encouraging the preservation and teaching of cultural values.

Regression analysis shows that education is an essential factor in expanding livelihoods. However, people still face difficulties in capital, information, and technology (“I want to expand my livestock farm, but I do not know how to borrow capital” - Ms. Pham Thi H.). Therefore, investment in education, vocational training, support for access to information, capital, and infrastructure improvement is essential.

Expanding livelihoods has a positive impact on the ability of Muong people to escape poverty, especially access to essential services such as education, health care, and clean water. Success stories confirm this: “Since having a fish pond, my family has greatly improved...” (Mr. Hoang Van N.), and “Since borrowing capital to plant forests, life has become much less difficult” (Ms. et al.).

In short, to sustainably help the Muong people escape poverty, the government, businesses, and the community must cooperate in investing in education and vocational training, preserving and promoting culture, improving infrastructure, and creating favorable conditions for people to access resources.

Independent variable	Unst, standardized regression coefficient (B)	St, standardized regression coefficient (Beta)	t- value	Significance level (Sig.)	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
Constant	3.125		8.045	0.000	
Unique culture	0.046	0.032	0.356	0.0578	1.329
Developing community tourism	-0.134	-0.256	-1.657	0.049	1.409
Applying high technology to production and processing	0.057	0.078	1.136	0.562	1.505
Developing traditional crafts	0.065	0.087	1.253	0.030	1.129
Invest in education and training	-0.189	-0.214	-3.100	0.027	1.334

Dependent variable: Livelihood expansion ability
Sample capacity: 400
F value = 1.261
Sig value = 0.18, with a significance level of 95%, proving that natural disasters, epidemics, and lack of means of production impact the ability of Muong ethnic households to escape poverty.
Adjusted R2 value = 0.58
Durbin Watson value = 0.072

Results of analyzing survey data for research topic 2023

Table 2. Regression analysis of factors belonging to cultural capital with livelihood development

The results of the multivariate regression analysis showed a value of Sig = 0.018. The variables included in the model had a variance inflation factor (VIF) much smaller than 10, indicating that they did not have multicollinearity. The Durbin-Watson coefficient of the model was 0.72, indicating that the model was correlated. The adjusted R2 coefficient of the model was 58%, indicating that the regression model of the Muong people’s livelihood expansion ability proposed by the study was appropriate.

Two factors were not statistically significant: unique culture Sig = .578 and application of high technology in production and processing Sig = .562. This seemed contrary to the initial expectations about the potential of cultural tourism and technology application. However, in-depth interviews revealed some potential reasons: *“Tourism also has visitors, but they are mainly transient visitors, they come to see and then leave, few people stay”*. (Bui Van T., homestay owner in K. village. This shows that the unique culture has not been effectively exploited to create attractive tourism products, retain tourists, and create sustainable income for the people. *“Modern machines are good, but we do not know how to use them, and buying them is very expensive”*. (Hoang Van N., a farmer in D. village, said the people’s lack of knowledge, skills, and financial resources hinders the need to apply high technology.

Regression analysis shows that developing traditional crafts (Sig= .030) and investing in education and training (Sig= .027) are statistically significant in expanding the livelihoods of the Muong people. Genuine sharing from the community further reinforces this.

Ms. Ha Thi M., an experienced brocade weaver, emphasized the need to maintain and develop traditional crafts: “I think we should open craft classes for young people in the village, both to help them have stable jobs and to preserve the traditional crafts of their ancestors”.

Not only that, the Muong people also attach great importance to education and hope for a brighter future for their children.

Ms. Pham Thi H., a farmer in T. village, worried: “I want my children to have a good education, to have a better job in the future, and not to suffer like their parents”. Education is considered the key to escaping poverty and moving forward in life.

This is further confirmed when analysis shows that the ability to expand livelihoods greatly depends on workers’ education and age group. Young people, equipped with better knowledge and skills, will be more proactive in grasping information, applying scientific and technical advances, and seeking economic development opportunities.

Mr. Luong Van D. (25 years old, S. village), who has an intermediate agricultural degree, enthusiastically shared: “I graduated from intermediate agricultural school. I want to apply the knowledge I have learned to growing crops and raising livestock in my hometown”.

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Criteria	Medium	Degree of influence
Increase per capita income	3.12	4
Stabilize revenue sources	3.16	1
Access to essential services: education, health, clean water, and sanitation	2.12	6
Increase property value	2.94	5
Ensuring food sources and diversifying food sources	3.30	2
Increase your ability to save and reduce debt	3.08	3
Overall average	2.95	
Results of ANOVA variance test on differences in scores assessing the impact of livelihood expansion on the ability of Muong ethnic households to escape poverty		
F-Statistic: 3.036		
Statistical significance level: Sig: 0.003 > 0.05 shows there is a difference between 6 criteria groups		

Results of analyzing survey data for research topic 2023

Table 3. Impact of the ability to expand and livelihoods on the ability of Muong ethnic households to escape poverty

The analysis of the impact of livelihood expansion on the ability to escape poverty of Muong ethnic households showed positive results. In general, livelihood expansion had a clear positive impact, with an average score of 2.95. However, the ANOVA (Sig: 0.003 < 0.05) showed that the impact of the criteria was different.

Access to essential services such as education, health care, clean water, and sanitation had the highest impact (3.12). This was demonstrated through in-depth interviews with people:

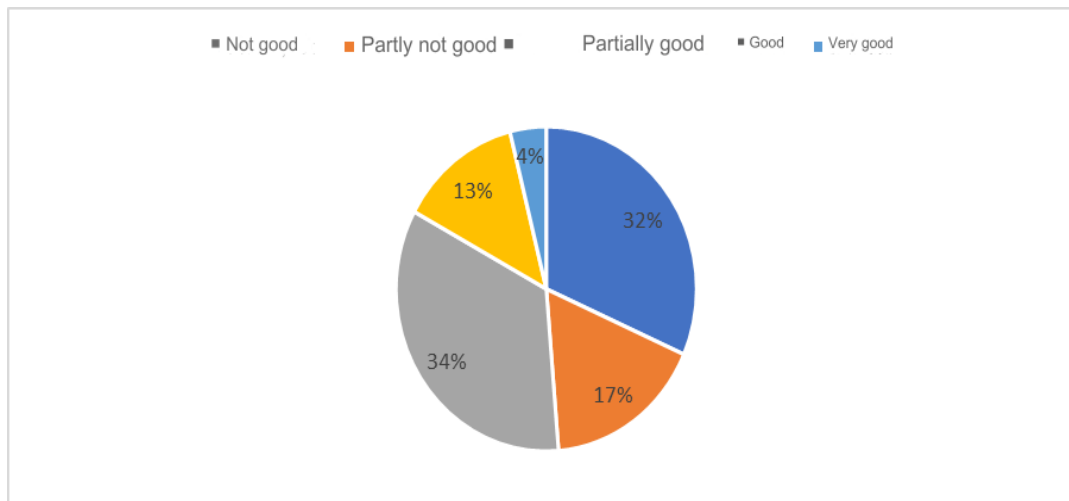
“In the past, because of poverty, my children had to drop out of school to help the family. However, the economy has improved since I opened a small shop, so I have sent my children back to school. I want them to have a full education and a better future”. (Ms. Lo Thi P)

Stabilizing income and ensuring food sources are also highly appreciated (3.16 and 3.30, respectively). People shared:

“My family used only to grow rice, so income was unstable. When there was a good harvest, we had a surplus, but when there was a bad harvest, we had a food shortage. Since I joined the fruit tree growing cooperative, my income has been much more stable, and I no longer have to worry about hunger”. (Mr. Bui Van H).

Increasing per capita income, asset value, and savings capacity have a medium impact (from 2.94 to 3.08). Although necessary, perhaps because people still lack many conditions to access capital sources and markets, improving these criteria is still limited.

The research results show that expanding livelihoods can help Muong people escape poverty. However, to achieve the highest efficiency, support policies must focus on critical areas such as education, health, clean water, stabilizing income sources, and ensuring food security.

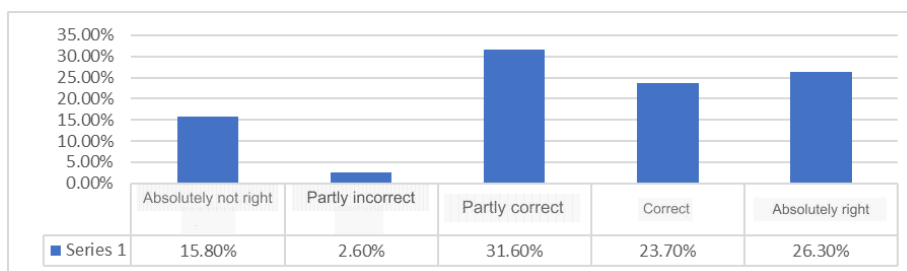


Analysis of survey results by the research team, 2023

Image 1. Comments on the capacity to expand and livelihoods of Muong ethnic households

Analysis of the survey results shows that the ability to expand livelihoods and ethnicity are correlated ($\text{Sig} = 0.018 < 0.05$). The ability to expand the livelihoods of poor households is still limited, as shown by the majority of households self-assessing their ability as “not good”.or “partly not good”. On the contrary, the number of households with “good”.and “excellent”.abilities accounts for a very modest proportion.

“My family only knows how to farm, but in recent years, there have been continuous crop failures, so we do not have much left. I also want to do other business, but I do not know what to do”. (Mr. Bui Van Q)



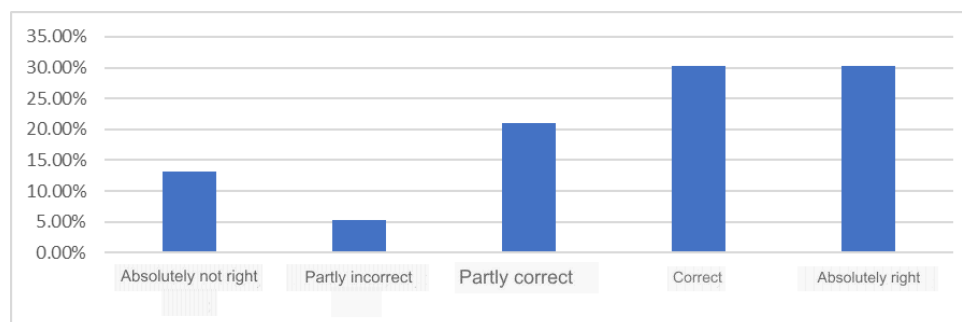
Analysis of survey results by the research team, 2023

Image 2. Assessment of economic development potential based on national cultural identity

The analysis results ($\text{Sig} = 0.023 < 0.05$) show that the ability to expand livelihoods based on national cultural identity is not high. The reason may stem from the fading of traditional cultural identity and the mentality of “being content with one’s lot”.and “seeing poverty as normal”.of some people.

“In the past, my village was famous for brocade weaving, but now few people do it. Young people prefer to work for companies”. (Ha Thi Y).

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Analysis of survey results by the research team, 2023

Image 3. Desire to preserve and promote the cultural identity values of the nation

The research results (Sig = 0.023 < 0.05) show that the Muong people want to preserve and promote the cultural identity values of the nation. Up to 60% of the survey respondents admitted that this desire is “correct”.or “completely correct”.

“I see that many Muong people no longer wear traditional costumes, only when there are festivals. I think we need to preserve our cultural identity”.
(Mr. Quach Van T).

4.3. The relationship between cultural identity and livelihood development of the Muong

The Muong’s cultural identity, with its unique Indigenous knowledge, traditional crafts, beliefs, festivals, etc., has great potential for promoting livelihood development and improving the community’s quality of life.

Indigenous knowledge associated with sustainable livelihoods: The Muong possess a rich treasure trove of indigenous knowledge about agriculture, forestry, and traditional medicine. They deeply understand crops, livestock, farming methods suitable for natural conditions, and how to use herbs to treat diseases. This knowledge helps the Muong maintain agricultural production and ensure food security, but it can also be applied to develop typical products, contributing to diversifying livelihoods. For example, knowledge about medicinal plants can be used to produce herbal teas, massage oils, bath medicines, etc., to serve the healthcare needs of people and tourists. Some typical agricultural products such as upland sticky rice, wild honey, and rice wine... can also be developed into commodities, expanding the consumer market and increasing people’s income.

“We Muong people live in the forest. The forest gives us food, medicine, and many other things. Like this tree” (Mr. Bui Van H pointed to a small tree growing along the road) “can cure coughs” (Mr. Bui Van H, 52 years old). This knowledge can be applied to develop medicinal products, attracting tourists interested in traditional medicine.

Traditional crafts - Cultural treasures and economic potential: Muong people have many unique traditional crafts such as brocade weaving, weaving, making paper, forging, wood carving... These handicrafts have aesthetic value, preserve traditional cultural beauty, and have high economic potential. In the context of tourism development, unique handicrafts can become attractive souvenirs for tourists, contributing to generating income for the people while promoting the cultural image of the Muong people to domestic and foreign tourists. However, many traditional handicrafts of the Muong

people face the risk of fading away due to a lack of consumer markets, difficulty competing with industrial products, and lack of human resources. Therefore, preserving and promoting traditional craft villages must focus on infrastructure investment, vocational training for the younger generation, and product promotion and support for consumption.

“I have been weaving brocade since I was a young girl. In the past, every Muong girl had to know how to weave brocade to make clothes and as a dowry when getting married” (et al. al. M, 70 years old, while weaving brocade). “Nowadays, there are very few weavers, mainly old people like me”. Brocade products can be developed into typical goods to sell to tourists.

Beliefs, festivals - The foundation for cultural tourism: Muong people have a rich spiritual life with many unique traditional rituals and festivals. Festivals allow people to exchange and connect with the community and teach cultural values to the younger generation. In addition, many Muong festivals have the potential to develop into attractive tourism products, attract visitors, and contributing attract visitors and contribute to increasing income for the community. For example, the rain-praying festival, typical cultural spaces, and the new rice festival’s unique rituals and cultural spaces can attract tourists to learn and experience. However, community tourism development needs to be carried out sustainably, ensuring both economic development and the preservation of local people’s cultural identity.

Cultural identity is an invaluable asset for the Muong people and Thanh Hoa. It is also an essential resource for livelihood development. Correctly recognizing this relationship, combining the preservation and promotion of cultural identity with economic development will open up many opportunities for the Muong people to increase their income, improve their quality of life, and build a sustainable community.

4.4. Discuss

Research has shown that cultural identity can be essential in improving sustainable livelihoods and reducing poverty among the Muong people in Thanh Hoa. However, not all aspects of cultural identity positively impact livelihoods.

Impact of cultural factors on livelihoods: Although they are potential factors, research shows that they have not had a statistically significant impact on the ability to expand Muong people’s livelihoods. This may be due to the limitations in exploiting and promoting unique cultural values or the ineffective application of technology in production and processing. Community tourism provides opportunities to increase income and introduce Muong culture to tourists. Developing traditional handicrafts helps create unique products with high economic value. Investing in education and training enhances Muong people’s competitiveness and adaptability in the labor market.

Impact of livelihoods on poverty alleviation: This factor has the most significant impact on poverty alleviation. This highlights the importance of investing in infrastructure and public services in the Muong areas, as the Muong people need a stable source of income and food security to escape poverty sustainably. Although increasing income, assets, and savings have positive impacts, they have a lower impact than the above factors.

Relationship between cultural identity and poverty alleviation: The study shows a correlation between these two factors, suggesting that cultural identity can be an essential driving force for promoting sustainable livelihoods. Economic hardship and

lack of support can lead to losing traditional cultural values. Therefore, solutions are needed to preserve and promote cultural identity in economic development. The Muong people strongly desire to preserve and promote their cultural identity, especially in agricultural production, forestry, animal husbandry, traditional handicrafts, and tourism development.

Policy implications: There should be policies and support programs for the Muong people to exploit their unique cultural values more effectively, especially in community tourism and traditional handicraft development. Improve the intellectual level and vocational skills of the Muong people, especially the young generation, so that they can participate in new economic activities and a competitive labor market, ensuring that the Muong people have full access to essential services such as education, health care, clean water, and environmental sanitation. It is necessary to develop programs and activities to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of the Muong people while encouraging creativity and adaptation of culture to the modern context. Encourage Muong people to participate in the planning and implementing development programs, ensuring that solutions meet the needs and aspirations of the community.

5. Conclusion

The research results indicate that cultural identity can play a critical essential role in promoting sustainable livelihoods and improving the ability of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa to escape poverty. However, not all aspects of cultural identity positively impact livelihoods. However, there must be a close combination between preserving and promoting cultural identity with economic development, investing in education and training, and improving infrastructure and public services. At the same time, there needs to be appropriate support policies, creating conditions for the Muong people to exploit unique cultural values more effectively, especially in community tourism and developing traditional handicraft products. In addition, improving the educational level and vocational skills, especially for the younger generation, is essential for them to participate in new economic activities and competitive labor markets.

This study provides an in-depth look at the relationship between cultural identity and sustainable livelihoods of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa, thereby emphasizing the importance of preserving and promoting cultural identity in economic development. From there, appropriate solutions and support policies should be proposed to help the Muong community develop the economy, preserve culture, and sustainably improve the quality of life, sources, and related content.

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