

Socio-Cultural Sustainability of Traditional Healing Practices in the Mainland and Coastal Areas of Antique

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Abstract

This research seeks to explore the lived experiences of the traditional healers in Tibiao and Culasi, Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan, determine the most common types of traditional healing practices as well as the pressing challenges and its continuity. Using a qualitative case study, visiting sites, reviewing research articles, in-depth interviews, were conducted with purposively selected experienced traditional healers. Thematic analysis revealed three themes: (1) The World of Traditional Healers with five sub-themes (a) Traditional Healing as a God -Given Gift, (b) Traditional Healing as Traditional Knowledge Transfer, (c) Sacred Responsibility of community well-being, (d) Traditional Healing as a Family Legacy and (e) Challenges and Continuity Through It All, (2) Traditional Healing: A Sacred Form of Blessing with two sub-themes (a) Energy Clearing and Restoring Harmony (Hilot, Pagbanyos and Pagtambal) and (b) Connection to the Divine (Panguli, Pang luy-a and Paghalad), (3) Traditional Healing: Preserving the Legacy with four sub-themes: (a) Intergenerational Transmission, (b) Record and Archive (c) Community Engagement and (4) Advocacy and Protection. Traditional healing practices presents the holistic, community-rooted systems of care shaped by indigenous beliefs, cultural heritage and centuries of traditions. The families of the participants are deeply rooted in ancestral knowledge, spirituality and community care. They focus on the holistic well-being, blending physical remedies such as herbs, medicinal plants and massage with cultural or spiritual practices to treat physical and spiritual ailments or issues. Parents and elderlies often involve their children in ensuring that the legacy is passed down through generations by means of cultural preservation and continuity. A total of 14 medicinal plants were recorded and identified by the 5 traditional healers to treat various ailments such as cough, colds, toothache, constipation, stomach pain, diarrhea, and fever. Different parts of the presented medicinal plants were used to treat such ailments and illnesses. Challenges will always be there but preserving traditional healing practices in the Philippines is critical for cultural continuity, equitable healthcare, ecological sustainability, and community resilience, it helps counter cultural erosion and strengthens pride in Filipino identity.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural Sustainability, Traditional Healing Practices, Indigenous knowledge System, Case Study

Introduction

Traditional healing practices are among humanity's oldest and most diverse systems of care, deeply embedded in the cultural, spiritual, and ecological contexts of communities across every continent. As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), traditional medicine encompasses "codified or non-codified systems for health care and well-being, comprising practices, skills, knowledge and philosophies originating in different historical and cultural contexts and emphasize holistic balance between mind, body, and environment (WHO, 2025a). Today, such practices are used by 40–99% of populations in 170 countries, serving as primary or preferred care for billions—particularly in rural and underserved regions—while global demand grows amid rising interest in personalized and preventive health (WHO, 2025b; WHO, 2025c).

Among Indigenous communities globally, healing is often tied to land stewardship and intergenerational knowledge—for example, Aboriginal Australian practices prioritize "connection to country" and communal well-being, while Native American traditions use sweat lodges, plant medicines, and ceremonial healing (Moodley & West, 2025; McCormick, 2025).

In Southern Africa, spiritual healers and herbalists integrate divination, ancestral rituals, and plant-based remedies to address physical, mental, and social imbalances, with an estimated 60% of South Africa's population consulting them alongside modern providers (Arden, 2023; Mokgobi, 2015). In Latin America, curanderismo (Mexican and Latinx folk healing) blends Indigenous Mesoamerican practices, Spanish colonial influences, and African diasporic traditions, focusing on ritual cleansing, herbal medicine, and emotional healing (Torres & Chavira, 2025; Zavaleta, 2020). Asian systems such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Ayurveda have been codified over millennia (Micozzi, 2025; Charming China, 2025).

Traditional healing is a part of the Filipino culture that has been passed down through many generations and is continuously being practiced, especially in far-flung barrios and barangays in the country (Rebuya, Lasarte, & Amador, 2020). Traditional Filipino medicine takes a holistic view of the individual, including environmental factors that affect a person's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Healing practices were first documented in the 16th century at the start of Spanish colonization, so it's hard to tell how early they began. They maintained culture, religion, and medicine for their tribes, and communicated with spirits that were thought to be associated with natural phenomena (Nomoto, 2020).

In Zamboanga City, it was observed that both affluent and poor Zamboangueño will seek advice from traditional healers. In some informal interviews, some patients opted to visit traditional healers because they recovered from their medical problems after the consultation (Molina & Esperat, 2020). It was found that ancient "parabulong" in the Partido area, Camarines Sur, is commonly called albularyo which is considered as the "general practitioner" knowledgeable in most of the folkloric modalities, usually versed in the use of medicinal herbs and spiritual/supernatural interventions (Rebuya, et. al, 2020). In Iligan City, this is also the case. According to Del Fierro and Nolasco (2013), a traditional healer in Cebuano society is called "mananambal", is a local medicinal doctor who resorts to indigenous means of treating patients who are in pain or have been long suffering from various forms of illness caused by supernatural factors.

With the introduction of hospitals, improvement of technology, production of healthcare professionals, and western medicines, traditional healing practices started to diminish. Nonetheless, since the healthcare system of the Philippines is underdeveloped, many Filipinos especially those of low socioeconomic consult their medical problems to traditional healers (Molina & Esperat, 2020).

In the lone province of Antique, where mountains meet the sea, is considered a place of the "maaram", the Karay-a shaman who knows the ways of the spirit world and speaks to the elementals in Kinaray-a or Hinaraya. Kinaray-a is the language of Antique (from "hantik-hantik," or big, black ants) and the upland communities of Iloilo and Capiz provinces (Calawag, 2015).

There has been limited studies on how these practices can promote socio-cultural sustainability to allow communities for more inclusive health policies that respect diverse healing practices. Thus, this study aims to explore the lived experiences of the traditional healers in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan, determine the most common types of traditional healing practices as well as the pressing challenges and its continuity.

Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of the traditional healers in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan, determine the most common types of traditional healing practices as well as the pressing challenges and its continuity for the academic year 2024-2025. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the traditional healers in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan?
2. What are the most common traditional healing practices perpetuated in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan?
- *How are medicinal remedies being utilized by the traditional healers to cure particular illnesses?
3. What are the challenges and ways in order to preserve the socio-cultural sustainability of traditional healing practices in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan?

Methods

Research Design

Qualitative research was used in this study, it is the "collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., nonnumerical) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest" (Gay et al., 2012, as cited in Chow, 2021).

Qualitative Case study was employed in this study is as it was aligned with the purpose of this study, which was to explore the lived experiences of the traditional healers in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan, determine the most common types of traditional healing practices as well as the pressing challenges and its continuity. Case study methodology is a flexible, context-sensitive inquiry to explore complex phenomena that will lead the findings into actionable solutions (Poth et.al., 2025).

Participants

The participants comprised of ten (10) traditional healers in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan. There were three participants from Tibiao, three participants from Culasi and two participants per island. These traditional healers served as the primary key informants. Participants in the study are traditional healers who have been in practice for at least fifteen (15) years, must consider themselves actively engaged in the medium with good physical and mental condition, and are willing to participate and cooperate during interviews. Pseudonyms were assigned for confidentiality.

Summary of the Participants Demographic Profile

Traditional Healer	Age	Experience	Residence	Family/ Economic Background	Socio-	Traditional Healing Performed	Medicinal Remedies Used
“Rudy”	65 years old	50 years	Tibiao	He became a traditional healer at the age of 18. On the other hand, his grandmother was a well-known “surano” in their town which is in Tibiao.		Pagtatambal, Panguli, Hilot, Paghalad, Pangluy-a, Pagbanyos	Luy-a, Lana, Herbs, Eggs, Plates, Cotton
“Victorino”	64 years old	33 years	Tibiao	He has a son in Mindanao, who also practices traditional healing.		Hilot, Pagbanyos	Lana, Herbs, Eggs, Plates
“Rosal”	70 years old	50 years	Tibiao	Growing up in a poor family, she became a traditional healer at the age of 20. On the other hand, her grandfather was a well-known “surano” in their town which is in Tibiao.		Pagtatambal, Panguli, Hilot, Paghalad, Pangluy-a, Pagbanyos	Luy-a, Lana, Herbs, Eggs, Plates, Cotton
“Lasardo”	66 years old	15 years	Culasi	His mother and his family were traditional healers. He only finished high school due to financial problems.		Hilot, Pangluy-a, Pagtatambal, Paghalad	Luy-a, Lana, Herbs
“Pinang”	78 years old	52 years	Culasi	Life was hard, she was once a seller of fruits and vegetables that came from their own farm land to support the family.		Hilot, Pangluy-a	Luy-a, Lana, Herbs, Eggs, Plates

"Anabel"	65 years old	30 years	Culasi	She became an assistant healer of her mother at a young age.	Pagtatambal, Panguli, Hilot, Pangluy-a, Pagbanyos	Luy-a, Lana, Herbs, Eggs, Plates
"Tahlia"	55 years old	15 years	Batbatan, Culasi	Her ancestors were known traditional healers in their community. She didn't finish her elementary education. (Low income)	Pangluy-a	Luy-a, Herbs, Plates, Knife
"Salome"	62 years old	40 years	Batbatan, Culasi	Started performing traditional healing when she was 22 years old. She and her husband worked together in the rice farm to support their family. (Low income)	Pangluy-a, Pagpabata	Luy-a, Herbs, Plates, Lana, Knife
"Alison"	92 years old	70 years	Mararison, Culasi	Her life was difficult when she was young. Her family doesn't have the money so she didn't finish her elementary education. (Low income)	Pangluy-a	Luy-a, Plates, Knife
"Norman"	44	15 years	Mararison, Culasi	Aside from being a <i>manog hilot</i> , he also works as fisherman to provide the needs of his family. (Low income)	Pagbanyos, Panghilot, Pagtambal	Herbs, Lana

Ethical Consideration

Given the importance of ethics in conducting research and the challenges around conducting research, universities go to great lengths to protect the dignity and safety of research participants. (Blaxter et al. 2010 as cited in Pamos, 2021) suggested that “ensuring that your research is ethically appropriate is a significant aspect of the conduct of sound research.” Confidentiality is of utmost importance when carrying out research.

To comply with ethical considerations in conducting the research, number of ethical principles were considered: a) Partnerships with the national Commission on Indigenous peoples (NCIP) and local community councils to ensure/ obtain informed consent, respect for Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles and safeguards against appropriation of knowledge; (b) minimize the risk of harm to participants; (c) protect their anonymity and confidentiality; (d) avoid using deceptive practices; and (e) give participants the right to withdraw from your research.

Permission to record the interview was obtained from the participants. Each participant was also be informed that the information gathered while conducting the research will only be used primarily in this study.

The research instrument is composed of two parts. The first section collects personal information about the weavers who served as the creative hand weavers, while the second part consists of questions about their lived experiences as experienced weavers, what are the meanings and values attached to their products and the

challenges as well as opportunities they have experienced. To gain a rich narrative, the participants were given the freedom to elaborate on their responses by sharing vivid and thorough accounts. Furthermore, the researchers asked for follow-up questions to clarify the details, gain deeper insights and most importantly gather comprehensive data.

Data Collection Process

Preliminary interpretation of the narratives was conducted concurrently with data collection to assess data saturation. After the 6th participant was interviewed, no new themes or significant statements emerged, signaling that data saturation had been reached. As a result the sample size was deemed adequate, in line with the inductive thematic saturation model proposed by Yang et al. (2022). Each of the participants took part in different one-on-one interview sessions, during the conduct of site and field observations. Every interview lasts between 45 minutes to more than an hour. The first interview aimed to build rapport and gather basic personal information using a semi-structured format. Before each interview session, the study's objectives were explained and the participants agreed to audio-record the interviews. The sessions concluded with expressions of gratitude and the distribution of token to the participants.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed a systematic approach using thematic analysis. Prior to analyzing the data, all interviews were transcribed and translated to English, all were studied in-depth, repeatedly to understand the overall data set of the narratives of the participants. Through this process a predetermined coding scheme was applied to the transcripts and the data were systematically coded to identify key concepts related to the lived experiences of the traditional healers in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan, determine the most common types of traditional healing practices as well as the pressing challenges and its continuity. These initial codes were then organized into broader themes, highlighting recurring patterns reflected in the narratives. These themes reflect and shed light on shared and differing experiences amongst weavers. The major themes identified in the coding process stood out due to their prominence and frequency in all the interviews and the way the themes explored vital components of the narratives of the participants most importantly these themes were present in all six interviews. The themes were defined to reflect the core ideas emerging from the data. The final step involve writing the findings, where each theme was illustrated with direct quotes from the participants, highlighting their narratives. Thematic Analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of the traditional healers in Tibiao and Culasi Antique and its coastal areas of Mararison and Batbatan, determine the most common types of traditional healing practices as well as the pressing challenges and its continuity.

Trustworthiness of Data

The trustworthiness of the data is a foundational element in qualitative research, encompassing four key dimensions: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each of these aspects was addressed carefully to ensure accurate representation of the narratives of the experienced traditional healers in Antique. To establish credibility which refers to the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, prolonged engagement and member checking were employed. This allows for a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the research phenomenon, moreover to validate the researcher's perspective and ensure that the findings accurately reflect their experiences. To enhance transferability, interview transcripts were included in the full manuscript. To ensure confirmability or the objectivity of the data to ensure that findings are grounded in the data and not shaped by researcher biases or preconceptions. To establish dependability overtime and across conditions or in different settings, independent expert auditing was conducted. This comprehensive approach to trustworthiness of the data is about demonstrating the quality and validity of the research, ensuring that findings are credible, reliable, and meaningful to both researchers and readers.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations, one of which is transferability, which refers to the extent to which the qualitative findings can be applied to other contexts, and this may be influenced by the sample size. However, the in-depth interviews provided rich and detailed insights into the participants experiences and accounts.

Results and Discussions

The findings highlighted the lived experiences of the traditional healers in the mainland and coastal areas of Antique. The key theme that were identified are (1) The World of Traditional Healers, (2) Traditional Healing: A Sacred form of Blessing and (3) Traditional Healing: Preserving the Legacy

The thematic analysis of the transcripts illuminated the lived experiences of the traditional healers in the mainland and coastal areas of Antique. The key theme that was identified is “The World of Traditional Healers” which included five sub-themes: (1) Traditional Healing as a God -Given Gift, (2) Traditional Healing as Traditional Knowledge Transfer, (3) Sacred Responsibility of Community Well-Being, (4) Traditional Healing as a Family Legacy and (5) Challenges and Continuity Through It All. These stories highlighted the lived experiences of the traditional healers.

The narratives revealed that the families of the participants are deeply rooted in ancestral knowledge, spirituality and community care. They focus on the holistic well-being, blending physical remedies such as herbs, medicinal plants and massage with cultural or spiritual practices to treat physical and spiritual ailments or issues. Parents and elderlies often involve their children in the practice of traditional healing ensuring that the legacy is passed down through generations by means of cultural preservation and continuity. This practice sustains the tradition but not seen as a major source of livelihood as this this is their way of serving the community.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Transcripts
The World of Traditional Healers	Traditional Healing as a God -Given Gift	This perspective frames the ability to practice traditional healing as a sacred gift originating from a divine source such as God, the Creator, or spiritual forces rather than a skill gained solely through human instruction or training. It holds that certain individuals are chosen or blessed with innate insight, intuition or a spiritual connection to channel healing energy, diagnose ailments, or use natural/ancestral methods to restore well-being.	“I see my ability as a gift from God, therefore I do not expect any material reward for the work that I do. Helping is not a matter of how much but even in little things .” “God gave me this gift of healing and that made me as an instrument to be able to help people recover from their illness. I always ask for his presence and guidance whenever I heal my patients.”
	Traditional Healing as Traditional Knowledge Transfer	It is deeply intertwined with a community’s beliefs, rituals and ancestral wisdom. This refers to the passing down of traditional healing knowledge, practices, skills and roles through successive generations within a family.	“When I was about six years old my grandfather would bring me along with him as he would go from one house to another to cure his patients in illnesses believed to be created by the unseen creatures. At the age of 20, I have learned and mastered those practices and I already started to help people”. “I have seen my mother performed these healing practices and at an early age and she would teach me how to heal the patients, since then I already knew that I’m destined to be a healer, indeed just as I am today.”
	Sacred Responsibility of community well-being	Traditional healers are seen as stewards of this gift, and are tasked with serving their communities with compassion and integrity, prioritizing the welfare of the community over personal gain,	“I don’t collect payment from my patients because I believe that it’s not me who actually treats them, I am just God’s instrument to treat these mystical illnesses. My only desire is to help other people without asking for whatever

		maintaining confidentiality and ensuring treatments are given with respect and consent.	compensations in return for my work.” “No, my help doesn’t have a price. I don’t ask for any sort of payment from my patients, I can only accept what they offer wholeheartedly. I am not using my abilities as a source of living for it is not appropriate”.
	Traditional Healing as a Family Legacy	This perspective emphasizes intergenerational continuity, healing abilities and wisdom are cultivated, preserved and shared within family bonds. Making it an integral part of the family’s identity, heritage and responsibility to their community. Their legacy tied to trust built over decades or centuries.	“Helping my patients just as my grandparents did, made me feel that I should continue this kind of work. I found my satisfaction and peace by extending a hand to others. It is always better to help than do nothing and just let them suffer in pain”. “My parents are both healers, I also followed their path and I will also pass this gift of healing to my children in order to help people in our barangay. For many years now, as a family of healers, we always wholeheartedly entertain patients and willing to help them.”
	Challenges and Continuity Through It All	Traditional healers face substantial barriers to sustaining their practices due to instability of income, old age, dominance of modern medicine, legal or regulatory uncertainty, erosion of knowledge and resource scarcity. Since heirs to the legacy often feel a personal and cultural obligation to continue the work, they practice strategy for continuity, viewing it as a way to honor their ancestors and serve their community.	“I was at the point in my life where I had to decide whether to stop or continue this healing practices. Since I’m already old my hands are getting weak and I can’t carry as much to heal some people but I’ve realized that even when I’m old, I still have the ability to heal someone, and I believe this is because of God who is guiding me.” “It’s hard to follow my parents’ footsteps as a faith healers, because honestly there is no stable income sometimes I don’t in a week, I have no patient .” “I will continue to practice healing rituals in order to help my family and other people in our barangay, who are at risk. I had a stroke, I can only move my right hand whenever I practice healing rituals, although it’s difficult for me but because there is someone who is in need of my help, so I can’t do otherwise”. “I will be a healer for life, When it comes to healing people with unexplainable illness, I’m always fully booked, sometimes I have to travel in different towns because I’ve been receiving calls from patients who needed my help but

			there were also times where they personally come to me for treatment.”
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Traditional Healing as a God -Given Gift

Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC) (2024) supports these findings, which stated that many Philippine traditional healers articulate their craft as a God-given gift, integrating prayer, ritual, and natural remedies to fulfill a sacred mandate of compassionate care. Fajardo, B. S., & Pansacola, M. A. V. (2013/2025) stated that healers invoke divine guidance and ancestral wisdom, viewing touch, herbal knowledge, and energy-balancing techniques as gifts from a higher power to restore holistic wellness.

Traditional Healing as Traditional Knowledge Transfer

Foor, D. (2025) supports these findings, in which healing knowledge and ancestral wisdom are inherited across generations, with rituals to transform intergenerational pain into blessings. Familial lineage is linked to cultural and spiritual healing, emphasizing that ancestors act as guides for living practitioners. Fajardo, B. S., & Pansacola, M. A. V. (2013/2025), confirms these findings, which stated that hilot knowledge is transmitted through patrilineal or matrilineal lineages, with healers teaching massage techniques, energy balancing, and herbal identification to family members. The practice is framed as a sacred inheritance tied to ancestral wisdom.

Sacred Responsibility of Community Well-Being

Apostol, V. M. (2010) supports these findings in which it highlighted how inherited healing lineages in the Philippines often provide care without cost, viewing it as a sacred duty to honor ancestral wisdom and support community health. Filipino healers provide completely free services with voluntary offerings as a gesture of gratitude, framing healing as a communal obligation rather than a profession. They use herbal remedies and spiritual rituals to address illnesses tied to supernatural causes, prioritizing care over compensation.

Traditional Healing as a Family Legacy

Demos, M. (2024), supports these findings which stated that healing traditions become family legacies through intergenerational bonding and communal reinforcement as they serve as tangible connections to ancestors and community stability. Family legacies ensure consistency in practice and alignment with cultural values, rooted in the belief that healing knowledge is a scared trust to be protected and shared.

Challenges and Continuity Through It All

Subedi, B. D. (2023), supports these findings which stated that challenges, include erosion of knowledge due to modernization, declining interest in healing and doubts about practice relevance healer mortality and old age. In relation to continuity, its practices remain deeply embedded in cultural traditions, with state policies supporting documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge. Government initiatives integrate traditional healers into the rural health systems.

The thematic analysis of the transcripts illuminated the most common traditional healing practices in the mainland and coastal areas of Antique. The key theme that was identified is “Traditional Healing: A Sacred Form of Blessing” which included two sub-themes: (1) Energy Clearing and Restoring Harmony, (Hilot, Pagbanyos and Pagtambal) and (2) Connection to the Divine (Panguli, Pang luy-a and Paghalad). These highlights the most common traditional healing practices.

The narratives revealed that the Philippines in general has a rich tapestry of traditional healing practices shaped by indigenous beliefs, culture, heritage and colonialism. These are practiced by “albularyos” healers which combines herbalism, divination and spiritual meditation to treat illnesses believed to stem from curses, spirit afflictions to cure physical ailments and resolves spiritual disturbances. All practices emphasize holistic wellness, linking physical health to spiritual balance, community and respect for nature and ancestors.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Transcripts
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Traditional Healing: A Sacred Form of Blessing	Energy Clearing and Restoring Harmony (Hilot, Pagbanyos and Pagtambal)	It refers to a core concept rooted in the belief that all living beings possess a vital, subtle life force that flows through the body, mind and environment. When this energy is blocked, depleted or imbalanced often due to stress, emotional trauma, negative influences or disharmony with nature, it can lead to physical illness, mental distress or spiritual unease. Energy clearing involves removing these blockages or stagnant negative energies, while restoring harmony aims to realign the life force with the body's natural rhythms as well as with the surrounding world.	"I learned massage because, way back then, when I fractured myself, I healed myself. Then, my children and wife asked me to massage them, so I practiced on myself and my family. Now, other people visit me for massages. I didn't expect that other people would visit me for massage because, as I said, I only started practicing on myself, but I am thankful because massage, and my fishing, help us survive." "Aside from panghilot, I also offer pagbanyos. I use efficascent oil or lana. Depending on my patient's heat tolerance and I use chant or prayer while doing pagbanyos" "My herbal leaf poultices have proven effective in relieving pain and discomfort in patients with broken bones. Patients consistently report a cooling sensation from the poultices, which are made with "kasla", "lamponaya", and "buyo" leaves. According to my observations this treatment is highly effective".
	Connection to the Divine (Panguli, Pang luy-a and Paghalad)	It refers to the intentional, sacred link established between a healer, the patient and spiritual forces, such as deities, ancestral spirits or universal life energy. This connection is believed to be the source of healing power, addressing not just physical ailments but also emotional, mental and spiritual imbalances which are often see as the root cause of illness.	"In Panguli, I use raw and fresh egg (thought to absorb negative forces) and will begin the healing while whispering an oracion while moving the egg around the patient's stomach. After the ceremony, make a sign of the cross in the stomach of the patient, and will then break the egg open into the plate to perform the reading. Only then that I will be able to see images or significant figures within the membrane and yolk of the egg, then would take a small amount of yolk and would rub into the patient's stomach. Healers then would ask the patient to burn the used egg to extract the negative energy or bad spirit". "I inherited from my lola, Emak. It involves using ginger,

			and I have been practicing it for 70 years. This is what I learned from my ancestors: using ginger as a healing method for their patients in the past. That is why I continue to practice whispering and use their abilities to help others like me”. “In Paghalad, I tell my patient and his/her family to gather together to make a ritual. The ritual started with an oracion and offer five chickens to appease the spirits and to avoid this illness from coming back”.
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Energy Clearing and Restoring Harmony

Fajardo, B. S., & Pansacola, M. A. V. 2013/2025, supports these findings, in which demystifies “hilot” (body massage), framing its spiritual and physical practices within a scientific framework. It explores history, diagnosis via pulse, leaves, or candles, manipulation techniques, herbal remedies, and the role of Mount Banahaw as a sacred healing site. It advocates for hilot’s integration into mainstream healthcare.

Rebecca Park Totilo (2020), supports these findings in which aromatic oils, linking their medicinal properties to prayers for worship, confession, and purification and provides scientific insights into their therapeutic benefits.

Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC) (2024), supports these findings in which it documented how local healers “albularyos” use poultices made from FDA (Food and Drug Administration)-endorsed herbs like akapulko (ringworm bush) and ampalaya (bitter melon), paired with orasyon (prayers) or bulong (whispered incantations) to treat skin infections, inflammation, and spiritual imbalance. The guidelines emphasize ritual intention to honor ancestral spirits (anito) and nature deities (diwata).

Connection to the Divine

Brown, C. G. (2012), confirms these findings in which examines the measurable effects of prayer in healing practices, including egg-based rituals. Finds that prayer often complements conventional medicine, with social and psychological benefits that improve health outcomes. StuartXchange, (2025), also stated how the “albularyo” or local healers use whispered prayers (bulong) or written invocations (orasyon) alongside eggs for diagnosis and healing. Eggs may be used to detect (energetic congestion) or counteract curses, with prayers often in Latin or pig-Latin.

Nor Mohamadi et al. (2022), validates these findings showing that ginger supplementation combined with prayer reduces pain and anxiety in patients, highlighting the synergistic effects of physical and spiritual healing.

Preacher J., (2024) validates these findings which stated that healing ceremonies where chickens are waved over patients while mediums chant epic prayers to communicate with spirits. The chicken’s sacrifice is accompanied by drum and gong rhythms to transform spiritual hostility into harmony. “Albularyos” sacrifice chickens to pacify unseen spirits believed to cause illness. Prayers blend animist invocations with Catholic devotions.

The thematic analysis of the transcripts illuminated the most common ways to preserve the traditional healing practices in the mainland and coastal areas of Antique. The key theme that was identified is “Traditional Healing: Preserving the Legacy” which included four sub-themes: (1) Intergenerational Transmission, (2) Record and Archive (3) Community Engagement and (4) Advocacy and Protection

The narratives revealed that the Preserving traditional healing practices in the Philippines is critical for cultural continuity, equitable healthcare, ecological sustainability, and community resilience—rooted in the country’s diverse heritage and practical needs. Preserving them helps counter cultural erosion and strengthens pride in Filipino identity—especially as younger generations increasingly adopt globalized lifestyles. Community-based initiatives that document and promote these practices (e.g., herbal gardens, healing workshops) strengthen social bonds and empower rural communities to take charge of their health.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Transcripts
Traditional Healing: Preserving the Legacy	Intergenerational Transmission	Facilitate formal or informal partnerships between expert traditional healers and younger learners, either within families or through cultural schools to pass on hands-on skills and cultural wisdom.	“I am thankful that my son who is in Mindoro was able to inherit my healing abilities even if I did not teach him, it just came naturally to him belonging in the family of healers, in this way the family will continue to help other people. We believe that this gift of healing came from Almighty God”.
	Record and Archive	Capture oral traditions, healing techniques, herbal remedies and cultural contexts through videos, interviews, written manuscripts or digital databases. This is to prevent loss as experienced traditional healers age	I pray and hope that there will be someone or many of the young people today, who are open-hearted to become healers using the traditional way of helping sick people because there are illnesses that can't be cured even by the specialist doctors in the hospital. I believe that people should see or witness our work, that's why I always say yes to an invite such interview like this and give consent for recording, so that the world will see that we, as Sorhanos are always open to helping sick people and many will benefit from it”.
	Community Engagement	Host workshops, festivals or demonstration events to showcase traditional practices not only to educate the public but foster community pride in traditional healing	“My children respect my faith and my devotion to help my sick patients. If my other family member or someone in our barangay is willing to follow my footsteps I will be happy and willing to teach them especially the youth so that this traditional ways of healing will be preserved for the coming generations to witness”.
	Advocacy and Protection	Push for official acknowledgement of traditional healers and their practices to protect against misappropriation and secure their rights.	“I will be happy if there is someone in my family to inherit my ability, in order to help sick people, who really believes in our healing ability. That person must have good intentions and is willing to

			help the sick people. It's dangerous to think that if the gift of healing will be taught or inherited by wicked people, they might inflict harm or illness to others especially their enemies. I believe that the traditional healers should be valued and respected".
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Intergenerational Transmission

Mvula, D., & Hamooya, C. (2022), validates these findings in which finds that healing knowledge is transmitted via demonstration and observation, primarily within families. Identifies barriers such as youth disinterest and formal schooling, recommending community-led education to sustain practices.

Maluleka, J. R., & Ngulube, P. (2018) confirms these findings, stating that ancestral guidance remains central to intergenerational transmission, despite modern challenges.

Record and Archive

Dababneh, N. E., et al. (2025) supports these findings, the paper notes that documenting oral histories, ceremonial practices, and medicinal plant use preserves indigenous healing wisdom. It underscores how archives support cultural revitalization and integration with modern healthcare.

Maluleka, J. R., & Ngulube, P. (2018) confirms these findings, the research finds that while traditional healers rely on oral transmission via ancestors, documentation through written or digital mediums safeguards tacit knowledge from extinction. It highlights the need for community-led archiving to balance cultural authenticity and accessibility.

Community Engagement

Hartmann, W. E., & Gone, J. P. (2023) supports these findings stating that after the examination during focus group insights from urban Indigenous communities, identified community cohesion, ceremonial participation, and trust-building as critical for integrating traditional healing into clinical services.

.Advocacy and Protection

Araújo, A. T. M., et al. (2025) confirms these findings, stated that it is important to examine legal and bioethical challenges in protecting indigenous healing, proposing frameworks to balance intellectual property rights with community autonomy and environmental sustainability.

Philippines: Department of Health (DOH) Promotion of Traditional Medicine (2024) validates these findings which positioned herbal medicine and practices like hilot as affordable alternatives, integrating them into universal health care.

Conclusion

Filipino traditional healing practices are deeply rooted in the country’s diverse indigenous and cultural heritage with a core philosophy that views health as a balance between the physical body, spirit, community and the natural world. Filipino traditional healers—occupy a vital space at the intersection of culture, spirituality, and community care. Their lived experiences are shaped by deep intergenerational knowledge passed down through oral traditions and hands-on apprenticeships, often rooted in respect for nature, ancestors and spiritual forces in the indigenous belief systems. Many healers navigate tensions between their traditional role and mainstream healthcare systems, facing stigma from some quarters while remaining trusted figures in rural and indigenous communities—where they address not just physical ailments but also emotional distress, family conflicts, and spiritual imbalances. They often operate with limited resources, relying on local materials and community support, and view healing as a holistic responsibility tied to the well-being of the entire community.

Recommendations

Preserving traditional healing practices in the Philippines requires a community-centered, multi-faceted approach that honors cultural sovereignty, safeguards knowledge, and addresses practical challenges.

1. Prioritize Community Leadership and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)

Partner with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to ensure compliance with FPIC principles, which protect communities from exploitation and ensure they retain control over their knowledge and practices.

2. Strengthen Intergenerational Transmission - Establish cultural schools or "Pamana Centers" that integrate traditional healing into community education, where elders teach younger generations not just techniques, but also the ethical, spiritual, and cultural foundations of healing or through workshops, festivals (e.g., fiestas, indigenous festivals) to highlight the cultural and healthcare value of traditional healing and mentorship opportunities to spark interest in continuing the practice.

3. Systematize Documentation with Cultural Sensitivity

- Share stories of healers and communities to challenge misconceptions and position traditional practices as part of the Philippines' national heritage.

- Collaborate with healers and communities to create community-owned knowledge repositories (e.g., digital databases, audio-visual archives, illustrated guides) that record practices, medicinal plant uses, and oral traditions.

4. Advocate for Policy Recognition and Support

Pushing for expanded policies that recognize indigenous healing practices, provide training and certification for practitioners, and integrate safe traditional remedies into public health programs.

- Work with local governments to allocate funding for preservation initiatives and protect healers' rights to practice.

5. Ensure Sustainable Management of Medicinal Resources

- Protect habitats of medicinal plants through conservation programs and promote sustainable harvesting practices (e.g., planting native species, avoiding over-extraction) and support local farmers and indigenous communities in cultivating medicinal plants as a livelihood, linking them to fair-trade markets where possible.

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