



Cultural heritage and traditional medicine: A cartography of healing practices

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Abstract

Purpose - This research explores the intersection of cultural heritage and traditional medicine in the Philippines, emphasizing the importance of preserving indigenous healing practices such as Hilot and herbal medicine amid ongoing modernization and the expansion of formal healthcare systems.

Methodology/Design/Approach - A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative interviews with traditional healers and community members, along with quantitative surveys to assess public perception and usage of traditional medicine.

Findings - The study reveals that traditional healing practices remain deeply embedded in Filipino communities and are valued for their therapeutic efficacy. However, these practices face increasing threats from shifting societal attitudes and the economic pressures posed by modern healthcare systems.

Originality/Value - This research contributes to the discourse on healthcare pluralism by highlighting the cultural and medical value of indigenous healing traditions. It underscores the need for inclusive health policies that integrate traditional knowledge into contemporary medical frameworks, supporting both cultural preservation and public health.

Keywords: coffee shops, service performance, customer satisfaction, correlational research, Dumaguete City

Introduction

Throughout the world, traditional healing is not merely a way to heal the physical body but an expression of strong cultural identity as well. Handed down for centuries through cumulative knowledge, culture, and rites, these health practices are examples of how and what people view as health and disease and, by extension, the natural universe. Traditional healings are, in many communities, particularly among rural and native populations, integrated into everyday living and are thoroughly embedded in native heritage. With the spread of modern healthcare systems, there is increasingly across the world an appreciation of culturally rooted healing practices that provide holistic and community-based modalities for well-being.

Traditional healing, in the Philippines, is a rich and sustained aspect of culture. Historic healers once called *babaylan* have now matured into various roles—*albularyo*, *manghihilot*, *mangtatawas*, and *faith healer*—who have each of their specific roles in society (Rebuya et al., 2020). They do not only serve to offer alternative medical care but they also function as cultural caretakers, retaining folk traditions, ceremonies, and vegetable-based wisdom transferred from generations to generations. The ongoing use of folk healing, especially in rural communities, is not merely a question of availability—it is an expression of deeply ingrained beliefs, family traditions, and shared memory.

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A prime example is the town of Hagonoy, Bulacan, where the traditional healing activity continues and holds symbolic meaning. The town itself is said to have gotten its name from the "hagonoy" plant (*Chromolaena odorata*), a local medicinal plant with anti-inflammatory and wound-healing effects (Sasan et al., 2021). Employed by local healers as one of their most important remedies, the plant illustrates the area's close association with nature and indicates the incorporation of ecological knowledge within folk medicine.

Nevertheless, although its therapeutic and cultural importance, the Philippine traditional medicine continues to be under-documented and under-valorized in academe, health care, and policy communities. The systematic charting or "cartography" of such healing practices, including their mechanisms, significance, and roles within society, continues to be wanting, especially in targeted places like Hagonoy. Traditional healers largely exist informally with scant institutional visibility or backing. Similarly, new generations are also becoming increasingly oblivious to these customs, which makes cultural knowledge threatened with extinction. Additionally, a lack of knowledge and misconceptions among the people have led to cultural resistance as modern medicine tends to be thought of as being more legitimate or effective.

Therefore, the present study sought to build a cultural map of traditional healing in Hagonoy, Bulacan, emphasizing how traditional healing operates simultaneously as healthcare alternatives and as living cultural expressions. Documenting the experiences, rituals, and knowledge systems of community healers and their people, the research responds to an important gap in the comprehension of the socio-cultural aspects of traditional medicine. It also assists in larger dialogues on integrative health systems, cultural conservation, and indigenous knowledge futures within a more and more global world.

The current research intended to create a cultural map of traditional healing in Hagonoy, Bulacan, underlining the way these practices work as both healthcare alternatives and crucial expressions of cultural heritage. Through the documentation of the experiences, rituals, and knowledge systems of local healers and their communities, the research was meant to fill an essential gap in understanding traditional medicine's socio-cultural aspects. It also led to wider debates on integrative health systems, cultural conservation, and the future of indigenous knowledge in a more globalized world. With a focus on the identification, documentation, and conservation of indigenous healing practices, the research ventured into medical knowledge that is under-documented or threatened with loss. Employing a mixed-methods methodology, the research gathered extensive information using quantitative surveys of 100 respondents who were users of traditional healing services and qualitative interviews of 10 active traditional healers in the said location. The research was particularly focused on traditional healing practices alone, without contemporary or biomedical medical care, and geographically and culturally confined only to Hagonoy, Bulacan. The results would be used for local heritage preservation activities and for community health work.

This research is undertaken to underscore and record the time-tested value of traditional alternative medicine, a healing system that is older than current biomedical practices and remains robust in varied cultural contexts. Traditional alternative medicine includes centuries-old therapeutic modalities—like herbal

medicine, spiritual healing, and manual therapies—that have been transmitted through generations and continue to be relevant in the treatment of both physical and psychosocial health issues.

In local communities, especially rural and marginalized ones, traditional healing has essential strengths. It tends to be more accessible, culturally sensitive, and affordable than professional health care. Additionally, it promotes overall well-being by working to treat not just the body but also the mind, spirit, and social aspects of health—issues that are commonly neglected in Western health models.

By concentrating on Hagonoy, Bulacan, this research hopes to make a contribution towards the preservation, recognition, and revitalization of threatened indigenous healing knowledge in the context of accelerating modernization and medical homogenization. These practices need to be documented and mapped, not just for their protection as intangible cultural heritage, but also for investigating the possibility of integrating them into mainstream health systems as complementary modalities. In so doing, this study hopes to promote greater understanding of culturally based healthcare practices and to create avenues for inclusive, community-based models of wellness.

Literature Review

Documentation and preservation of conventional healing practices are now more widely seen as important not only for maintaining cultural heritage but also to facilitate future scientific investigation. According to Agapin (2020), documentation of medicinal plants is the starting point for additional scientific investigation such as extraction, isolation, and characterization of active ingredients. This view is common to most studies of the ethnomedicinal practices in the Philippines, focusing on the importance of documenting traditional knowledge to bridge gap between traditional medicine and modern health systems.

A number of researches within the Philippines have been centered on documenting the medicinal plant species utilized by traditional practitioners. Agapin (2020) collected 80 plants in Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur, and reported Lamiaceae and Moraceae to be the predominant families. Likewise, Belgica et al. (2021) reported 74 medicinal plants in Albay, and Cordero et al. (2022) listed more than 130 species from the Panay Bukidnon group in Iloilo. Both studies observed the extensive use of decoctions, a mode of preparation seen in other areas, such as Hagonoy, Bulacan, where the same plant species are being used.

In addition, research conducted in Agusan del Sur (Arquion et al., 2020) and Leyte (Susaya-Garcia et al., 2020) supports the continued use of plant medicine, which continues to be an integral part of rural healthcare systems. The results highlight the significant role traditional healers and medicinal plants contribute to local health systems throughout the country.

Aside from the biological factors, folk healing is also deeply socio-culturally rooted. Cerio (2020) examines the history of folk healers in the Bicol region tracing back to the pre-colonial babaylan, discussing how colonialism and Western medicine have relegated indigenous healing practices to the margins. Bombales and Torres (2024) further stress the dilemma faced by traditional healers in terms of not receiving formal recognition and increasing disempowerment because of Western-dominated healthcare systems.

Research by Adovo et al. (2023) and Capiz State University (2023) offers further information on the social significance of folk healing, illustrating how the practice continues to be embedded in local health even when confronted by contemporary challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies bring to light the cultural resilience of indigenous healing systems despite the infiltration of contemporary medicine and education.

Biodiversity loss and the aging of traditional healers are a major threat to the conservation of indigenous knowledge. Junsongduang et al. (2020) sound the alarm regarding the loss of Thailand's traditional healing methods, exacerbated by the degradation of the environment. Similarly, Drew (2022) points out the lack of official documents pertaining to bush medicine in Aboriginal communities, emphasizing the potential loss of valuable plant-based information due to geographical and tribal variations.

This is an area of concern mirrored by studies conducted in the Philippines, which conclude that habitat loss and the extinction of medicinal herbs threaten the extinction of traditional healing systems (Tindowen et al., 2017). Along the same line, Li et al. (2020) discovered that ecological forces and the passing of old practitioners can cause irreplaceable loss of valuable medicinal lore, adding the imperatives for documentation of the practice before extinction.

The blending of indigenous knowledge with modern scientific practice is increasingly recognized as a key to improving healthcare systems. Caunca and Balinado (2024) make the case for the usefulness of traditional medicine knowledge in creating drugs and strengthening local health systems. In addition, research by Manobo scholars (2020) in Agusan del Sur illustrated the effectiveness of integrating ethnopharmacological information with plant molecular identification, thus connecting traditional healing with current scientific practices.

The collective body of evidence highlights the importance of documenting and conserving traditional healing practices urgently. Though modern influences, environmental degradation, and the aging of traditional healers are great challenges, documentation and preservation of these practices are essential to preserve cultural heritage and further scientific inquiry. The literature we reviewed is giving us a robust support for our project in Hagonoy, Bulacan, wherein we seek to document, verify, and maintain traditional healing traditions for cultural continuity as well as scientific inquiry.

Methods

Research Design

The research design of this paper utilized a mixed-methods method, wherein the qualitative and quantitative research methods are blended to come up with an extensive comprehension regarding the conservation of traditional healing procedures and medicinal culture in Hagonoy, Bulacan. The qualitative part was used in an effort to discover the intimate experiences, assumptions, and insights of the respondents on traditional healing practices through direct, personal interviewing. This method facilitated the researchers to obtain the subjective meanings and understandings of the participants, more so their emotional ties, coping strategies, and perceptions of cultural importance of traditional medicine. The quantitative part involved the systematic gathering and analysis of numerical data to quantify trends, patterns, and correlations in the use and experience of traditional healing practices.

The qualitative data were gathered using open-ended interview questions that invited participants to respond in their own words about their experiences and knowledge. This was complemented by participant observation where needed, enabling the researchers to develop a better understanding of the context and practices of the community. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, whereby key patterns, themes, and categories were derived from the transcripts. The quantitative information, however, was obtained from standard surveys and treated statistically to estimate the prevalence of the use of traditional medicine, demographic trends, and determinants of the maintenance of these practices.

Both data sets were triangulated to improve the credibility and robustness of the findings. The researchers took care to maintain a systematic and objective method of data analysis by regularly checking themselves for potential biases and hypotheses. By combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, this research design gave a thorough and balanced analysis of traditional healing practices in Hagonoy, Bulacan, providing valuable insights for the preservation and incorporation of these methods into modern healthcare practices.

Research Instrument

To explore the utilization of traditional alternative medicine in Hagonoy, Bulacan, a combination of interviews and surveys was used as the major data gathering techniques. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were used by the research to acquire detailed and accurate information on the use, duration, and effectiveness of traditional medicine. Demographic information, age, and gender were gathered using the survey questionnaires to aid in contextual appreciation of the respondents. The chief aim of such instruments was to record and examine the varied set of traditional healing methods in common usage within the community.

The survey tool was prepared to measure the prevalence of the use of traditional medicine, follow the length of time it was practiced, and estimate the perceived efficacy of different healing practices. In addition, open-ended questions were incorporated to enable the respondents to share detailed information about their practices and understandings of traditional healing. The interviews functioned to supplement the surveys by providing extended qualitative information, capturing the lived experiences and cultural meanings of traditional healing practices from the practitioners' and users' points of view.

Information collected through both surveys and interviews were compared to discover patterns, trends, and influences that enabled the sustained practice and maintenance of traditional healing practices in the region. Utilizing a mixed-methods framework, the research was enabled to provide both quantitative findings concerning the frequency and scope of traditional medicine and qualitative findings concerning the community's perception and appreciation of the practices. The research design aimed to gain a holistic representation of the importance and role of traditional alternative medicine in Hagonoy, Bulacan, and to establish guidelines for preserving and integrating it into contemporary systems of healthcare.

Data Gathering Procedure

Surveys and interviews were conducted in this research in order to obtain in-depth data regarding traditional ways of healing and medicine in Hagonoy, Bulacan. With the use of these two data-gathering tools together, this research hoped to develop a more integrated picture of traditional healing practices in the community. While quantitative data based on the surveys provided useful information about the extent and overall trends in the use of traditional medicine, the qualitative data based on the interviews shed light on the cultural importance and personal experience related to these practices. The use of a mixed-methods approach facilitated a richer and more detailed analysis of the world of traditional healing in Hagonoy. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative data enabled a richer examination of how these practices are understood, sustained, and transmitted within the community. Through the documentation of individual accounts and cultural meanings, the research sought to add to the general knowledge of traditional healing practices and their preservation potential. Finally, this research aimed to promote appreciation for these precious healing practices and guide plans for their preservation in the wake of contemporary healthcare innovations.

Data Analysis and Treatment

In this research, descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to examine the data gathered from surveys and interviews. Descriptive statistics were used for the survey to summarize and interpret the quantitative data. A Likert scale was used, providing respondents with a series of options, usually from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Measures like the mean, median, and mode were computed to determine central tendencies and frequent responses among participants.

For the qualitative data collected from interviews, thematic analysis was applied to determine, assess, and interpret significant themes and patterns in the responses. This facilitated the researchers to better understand the participants' experiences, motivations, and viewpoints. Through the merging of both qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques, the research was successful in presenting a complete picture of traditional healing in Hagonoy, Bulacan, highlighting both the wider trends and the specific, cultural subtleties involved in these practices.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics were given a prominent consideration in this study to promote respect for participants' rights and maintain the integrity of the study. All participants gave their informed consent to participate, thus being aware of the purpose of the study, the risks involved, and the way they would use their data (Israel & Hay, 2006). Voluntary participation was allowed, and the participants were free to withdraw at any point without any adverse consequences, in line with ethical requirements (Robinson, 2014). Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed, so that the participants' identities were not revealed and their personal data were not divulged in any report or publication (Babbie, 2010).

The "Do No Harm" principle was followed to guarantee that no physical or psychological damage was caused as a result of involvement. All attempts were made to reduce stress, discomfort, or any violation of privacy during the data collection process (Jordens et al., 2003). All these ethical principles guaranteed that the research was carried out with honesty, protecting participants' dignity and trust in the outcome.

Results and Discussion

The table 1 shows the frequency of use of different traditional healing practices in Hagonoy, Bulacan. Among the practices noted, Hilot was the most commonly used with 42% of the responses. This is followed by combined use of Herbal and Hilot treatment at 25%, and pure Herbal treatments at 15%. These numbers highlight the cultural significance and continued dependence on Hilot as the major traditional healing practice in the community. The use of herbal remedies, either alone or in combination with Hilot, also indicates the community's preference for plant and manual healing modalities.

Table 1. Healing Practices.

HEALING PRACTICES	N	%
Herbal	15	15.0%
Faith healing	6	6.0%
Hilot	42	42.0%
Ventosa	1	1.0%
Other	2	2.0%
Herbal/hilot	25	25.0%
Herbal/Faith Healing/Hilot	5	5.0%
Faith healing/Hilot	1	1.0%
Herbal/Hilot/Ventosa	1	1.0%

On the other hand, other folk modalities like Faith Healing (6%) and Ventosa (1%), as well as a wide variety of lesser-known modalities, made up 37% of the reported practices. The comparatively low prevalence of these practices could indicate limited availability, lower community recognition, or perceived ineffectiveness compared to the more popularly practiced Hilot and herbal remedies. Cultural choice, practitioner availability, and continuity of culture probably all contribute to influencing these patterns of traditional health care utilization in Hagonoy, Bulacan.

Table 2 provides statistical information regarding the perceived effect of modernization on traditional healing practice in Hagonoy, Bulacan. Results indicated varying perceptions among respondents. A significant number, captured through a mean score of 3.87, affirmed that modernization is causing the progressive erosion of traditional healing. Most closely related to this is the attitude that modernization affects local perceptions of these practices, but with a slightly higher mean of 3.91. While some other respondents (mean = 2.92) claimed that modernization has not really altered their perception of traditional healing.

Surprisingly, some participants perceive modernization as an obstacle towards the continuation of traditional healing, scoring a mean of 3.47. By contrast, other participants viewed it as a positive impact, with an average of 3.23, indicating that aspects of modernization may complement or even strengthen traditional healing practices. The differing views point to the multifaceted interrelationship between cultural heritage and modernization. The findings point to the necessity of additional context-dependent research to deconstruct how changes in society remold traditional healing systems. It is important to understand these dynamics, particularly when developing strategies for cultural preservation during times of accelerated modernization.

The table above presents a high consensus on the significant factors affecting consumer use of traditional medicine in Hagonoy, Bulacan. Respondents almost unanimously listed perceived usefulness as the most dominant factor, evidenced by a high weighted mean of 4.00. This was in turn followed by media and herbalists' influence (3.94) and the availability of herbal treatments (3.84), showing that trust in practitioners and accessibility are important determinants of use. Another high rate of agreement from the participants (mean = 3.77) regarded the social standing of traditional healers as an important factor influencing the acceptance of their practice. In the same vein, social discrimination and stigma were identified as barriers, with a mean score of 3.73.

Table 2. Impact of modernization in traditional healing.

INDICATOR	5	4	3	2	1	WEIGHED MEAN	INTERPRETATION
Due to modernization, the traditional healing practices are slowly fading.	21	55	15	8	1	3.87	AGREE
Modernization affects the locals' perception in traditional healing practices.	26	49	16	8	1	3.91	AGREE
Modernization did not change nor affect people's perception in traditional healing practices.	8	24	27	34	7	2.92	DISAGREE
Modernization has a negative impact on traditional healing practices.	12	38	39	7	4	3.47	NEUTRAL
Modernization has improved traditional healing practices.	13	30	26	29	2	3.23	AGREE

Table 4 shows the weighted means and respective interpretations of the perceived economic effect on traditional healing in Hagonoy, Bulacan. The highest weighted mean (4.14) reflects that a large majority of respondents concurred that economic crises can result in greater use of traditional healing practices, implying that financial difficulties might compel communities to opt for cheaper healthcare options. Another significant finding, with a mean of 3.74, indicates that the increasing demand for holistic wellness strategies is associated with the expansion of the wellness industry, which in turn supports traditional healing practices.

Additionally, an average score of 3.60 indicates concurrence among respondents that globalization and the commercialization of traditional medicine threaten cultural integrity. Further, a mean score of 3.45 indicates that most agree that economic empowerment would allow traditional healers to scale and professionalize their businesses. Finally, with a mean of 3.04, participants concurred that sustainable economic models can assist in supporting environmentally conscious traditional healing systems.

Together, these results indicate that economic considerations—everything from financial accessibility to international market trends—are central to the viability and conservation of traditional healing practices. Fostering more robust economic support systems and incorporating sustainability may strengthen the resilience and applicability of these cultural practices.

These results indicate that consumer interaction with traditional medicine is influenced by a mix of practical, social, and cultural factors. Perceived effectiveness, social endorsement, and public image through media are critical in influencing public opinion. In addition, the social status of traditional healers and stigma reduction are critical to achieving broader acceptance. In order to maximize the use of traditional healing systems, strategic action must target positive images in the community, enhance access to plant resources, and resolve discriminatory attitudes. These findings highlight the dynamic interplay between social forces and health choices, supporting the importance of inclusive cultural policy to aid traditional medical systems.

Table 3. Factors affecting use of traditional medicine.

INDICATOR	5	4	3	2	1	WEIGHED MEAN	INTERPRETATION
The perceived usefulness of traditional medicine can influence consumer use.	20	63	16	0	1	4.01	AGREE
The social impact of herbalists, and media can influence consumer use of medicinal herbs.	21	53	25	1	0	3.94	AGREE
Availability is external variables that can influence consumer use of medicinal herbs.	19	48	31	2	0	3.84	AGREE
Traditional healers' social standing significantly impacts the acceptance and effectiveness of their methods.	12	57	27	4	0	3.77	AGREE
Social stigma and discrimination against traditional healers and their practices can create barriers to access and limit recognition of their skills.	12	55	27	6	0	3.73	AGREE

Table 4. Economic determinants shaping traditional healing practices.

INDICATOR	5	4	3	2	1	WEIGHED MEAN	INTERPRETATION
Economic downturn increases traditional healing practices.	39	40	17	4	0	4.14	AGREE
Growing wellness industry boosts demand for holistic approaches.	2	38	37	2	2	3.74	AGREE
Globalization commercializes traditional medicines, threatening cultural integrity.	1	53	34	5	1	3.60	AGREE
Economic empowerment helps traditional healers expand.	1	38	43	9	1	3.45	NEUTRAL
Sustainable economic models support eco-friendly traditional healing practices.	16	53	27	4	0	3.81	AGREE

Table 5. Perception of cultural value and conservation of traditional healing practices.

INDICATOR	5	4	3	2	1	WEIGHED MEAN	INTERPRETATION
Preserving traditional healing practices is essential for maintaining our cultural heritage.	44	52	3	1	0	4.39	AGREE
The use of traditional healing medicine is a valuable part of our cultural identity.	35	52	13	0	0	4.22	AGREE
Teaching younger generations about cultural significance is important.	26	43	27	4	0	3.91	AGREE
Traditional healing practices offer a unique perspective on health that should be valued.	15	56	26	2	1	3.82	AGREE
Traditional healing methods are a vital part of our cultural identity and tradition.	26	55	15	4	0	4.03	AGREE

Table 5 revealed that 52% of 100 respondents were neutral to the statement that maintaining traditional healing practices is crucial in protecting cultural heritage, while 40% were in agreement that these practices are necessary in upholding the cultural history of Hagonoy. This gave a high weighted mean of 4.39. In addition, 52% of the local sample concurred and 35% strongly concurred that traditional health is an important part of cultural identity as indicated by a weighted mean of 4.22. When questioned regarding the significance of transferring traditional healing knowledge to the younger generation, 43% agreed and 4% disagreed, with a weighted mean of 3.91. Additionally, 56% of the respondents concurred and 15% strongly concurred that traditional healing beliefs provide a peculiar viewpoint of health worthy of more appreciation, resulting in a weighted mean of 3.82. Another 55% of residents concurred that such practices are an integral part of the community's culture, backed by a weighted mean of 4.03. These results demonstrate a strong public perception towards maintaining traditional healing as a way of strengthening Hagonoy's cultural heritage.

Community observations indicate that indigenous health continues to be of particular relevance in isolated regions where access to contemporary medical care is limited. Economic factors, such as the increasing expense of pharmaceutical treatments, were further mentioned as playing a role in influencing attitudes. In general, the information highlights the cultural, functional, and economic benefits of preserving traditional healing systems and identifies intergenerational transmission as key to their maintenance.

The table shows the summary of the community's view on the continuation and significance of traditional healthcare practice in Hagonoy, Bulacan. A majority of the respondents (57%) favored traditional medicine compared to modern medical interventions, having a weighted mean of 3.73. Interestingly, the combined 87% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that traditional healing techniques have established efficacy, with a high weighted mean of 4.29. In addition, 54% concurred and 37% strongly concurred that combining traditional and contemporary healthcare is worthwhile, with a weighted mean of 4.26. Cultural tradition was likewise a powerful force, as 61% of participants assented that customs had a significant bearing on their choosing to use traditional healthcare (weighted mean = 3.78). Although most respondents approved of traditional healing, 32% concurred and 20% strongly agreed on acknowledging possible dangers involved with certain practices and expressed a mean of 3.44 upon weighting. Somewhat surprisingly, 66% opined that traditional healers have a broader knowledge of the human body in comparison to traditional practitioners

and provided a corresponding 3.68 mean. In addition, 88% of the respondents confirmed that traditional healing is good, which led to a high overall mean of 4.36. The results show overwhelming support from the community for continued use and retention of traditional medicine. Inaccessibility issues, high cost of pharmaceutical medication, and poor medical infrastructure in rural areas were cited as major determinants of dependence on traditional healing. In general, the evidence points to the continued cultural and functional relevance of traditional health care, reaffirming its significance in the local health system and promoting its integration and retention.

Table 6. Community perception towards traditional healing practices

INDICATOR	5	4	3	2	1	WEIGHED MEAN	INTERPRETATION
I will prioritize traditional healing methods over modern medicine.	21	36	38	5	0	3.73	NEUTRAL
Traditional healing methods have been proven to be effective.	42	45	13	0	0	4.29	AGREE
I'm willing to combine traditional and modern medicine with a more comprehensive approach to healthcare.	37	54	7	2	0	4.26	AGREE
Cultural heritage and tradition play a major role in my decisions to use traditional healing methods.	16	50	30	4	0	3.78	AGREE
I recognize the potential side effects of the traditional healing methods.	20	32	26	16	6	3.44	AGREE
Traditional healers have a deeper understanding of the human body and mind compared to modern medical practitioners.	20	46	23	4	7	3.68	AGREE
I trust the efficacy of traditional medicine.	50	38	10	2	0	4.36	STRONGLY AGREE

Conclusion

The results of this research highlight the continued significance and cultural pertinence of indigenous healing practices in Hagonoy, Bulacan, even as modernization and paradigmatic changes in health have taken hold. Most of the participants showed strong commitment to the continued practice and upkeep of such traditional healing practices as Hilot and herbal medicine, which are practiced the most because they are accessible, effective, and deeply rooted in culture. The information also highlighted a more sophisticated public view of modernization: while it represents a danger for some in degrading the authenticity of traditional practices, for others it is an opportunity to heighten visibility and integration within formal healthcare systems. Economic considerations play a similar fundamental role—specifically among marginalized communities—where affordability and availability concerns most typically dictate the turn to traditional medicine.

In addition, respondents highlighted the need to teach younger generations about traditional healing in order to promote cultural continuity. Social determinants, including media influence, the reputation of local healers, and stigma reduction, were found to have a strong influence on attitudes and patterns of use. Notably, a large segment of the community had faith in the expertise of traditional practitioners, with many calling for a hybrid system that combines ancestral knowledge with modern medical innovations.

These findings mirror a combined appeal to protect traditional healing systems as an integral part of cultural heritage and community well-being. Hence, policy endorsement, integrative health models, and education programs sensitive to culture are crucial to support the value of these practices so that they can be integrated sustainably in the changing healthcare scenario.

Limitations

Although this research offers critical understandings of the persistence of traditional healing in Hagonoy, Bulacan, some limitations need to be noted to give a better picture of the topic. First, the research was carried out in a particular geographic area, which could restrict the applicability of the results to other regions with varying cultural, socio-economic, or demographic settings. The sample size, while adequate for the local population, might not be representative of the diversity of experience and views on traditional healing in larger or more urbanized areas. Also, the use of self-reported information from surveys and interviews carries the risk of response bias. The views of participants regarding traditional medicine may be subject to social desirability, especially when asked about sensitive issues like health practices, or to a lack of familiarity with more contemporary healthcare alternatives. Even with attempts to reduce this bias, the subjective nature of qualitative answers can still represent individual preconceptions and not objective trends.

Another limitation lies in the study's focus on local perspectives, which may overlook the broader scientific and medical community's views on the effectiveness and potential risks associated with traditional healing methods. This narrow focus could result in an incomplete understanding of the broader implications of integrating traditional healing into mainstream healthcare systems. Lastly, the research did not account for the possible impact of outside factors, like government policies, healthcare facilities, or educational programs, that may further influence the future of indigenous healing practices in the area. Future studies must investigate these outside factors and how they interact with local practices to offer a more complete picture.

In spite of such constraints, the research makes a valuable contribution to the existing debate on the maintenance of traditional healing and its relevance to modern healthcare.

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Declaration

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this work.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the manuscript preparation process

During the preparation of this work the author used Grammarly in order to correct spelling mistakes and help me make better sentences. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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