

Understanding Traditional Medicine Practitioner`s Perspectives in Promoting Health in Communities

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of the study was to explore community perspectives on the practice and value of traditional medicine in the Municipality of Malita, Davao Occidental, using a descriptive phenomenology research design. Five (5) participants, including traditional practitioners and employed and unemployed community members, were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide questionnaire and were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The results revealed two major areas: community views on the role of traditional medicine in promoting health and

community perceptions of its value. Under community views, three major themes emerged: accessibility and necessity of traditional medicine, healing effectiveness of traditional remedies, and proper and natural use of traditional medicine. Core ideas included its importance in areas without access to doctors, effectiveness of herbal remedies, provision of relief, proper adherence to treatment, and the belief that traditional medicines are natural. Under community perceptions of value, two major themes were identified: cultural knowledge and continuity, and knowledge transmission and shared experience. Core ideas included traditional medicine as culture and heritage, cultural continuity, traditional healers' knowledge and competence, imparting of wisdom from elders, and sharing of experiences.

Keywords: *Traditional medicine, Community perspectives, Cultural continuity, Herbal remedies, Descriptive research, Thematic analysis, Malita Davao Occidental*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine refers to the sum total of knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in the diagnosis, prevention and elimination of physical, mental and social imbalance, relying exclusively on practical experience and observations handed down from generation to generation, whether verbally or in writing (World Health Organization, 2023). It often involves natural remedies such as herbs, minerals, and animal-based products, as well as spiritual or manual techniques like acupuncture, massage,

or traditional rituals. Traditional medicine is one of the most common methods used in the treatment of ailments in most developing countries. Due to its intrinsic qualities, unique and holistic approaches as well as its accessibility and affordability, it continues to be the best alternative care available for the majority of the global population particularly for those in the rural areas of developing countries (Hamanyanga, 2019).

Statistics have shown that about 80% of the African population rely on traditional medicine as the first line of healthcare (Okaiyeto & Oguntibeju, 2021). In the Philippines, especially in Samar being a rich province in terms of cultural heritage practices and beliefs, folk medicine practices such as orasyon or bulong (mystical prayers), himulso (pulse checking), pagtatawas (diagnostic ritual using candle wax dropped in a basin of water), pasubay (determining the cause of sickness and possible treatment), pangalap (searching of medicinal plants), remain to be rampant (Alaga-Acosta *et al.*, 2023). However, there is a chance of negative effects when using traditional remedies incorrectly or in combination with contemporary medications. It is noted that while traditional healers in North Cotabato utilize over 63 plant species for various ailments, there is limited empirical data on their pharmacological properties, dosages, and potential side effects (Rubio & Naive, 2018).

The integration of traditional medicine into the national healthcare systems has grown to be a matter of focus for global health professionals especially for countries with such practices embedded in their history and culture (Rondilla *et al.*, 2021). However, there is a lack of understanding about how communities view the integration of traditional medicine into formal systems, particularly in terms of its potential to improve healthcare access, address cultural sensitivities, and support holistic health outcomes. Medicine must extend from the traditional individual patient-disease focus to promote prevention and alignment with public health and social needs (Dzau *et al.*, 2022).

Its standing is accompanied by prospects and challenges that it seeks to incorporate centuries old traditional knowledge into the evidence-based practice of modern medicine. Understanding perspectives of communities that relies on traditional medicine is important in determining the likelihood of success and sustainability of the integration efforts.

People's perspectives are central to the manner in which traditional medicine is used and understood the importance of the health system. Therefore, the researchers are interested in conducting this study to understand community perspectives on integrating traditional medicine into healthcare systems. By highlighting the importance of community voices, the study seeks to uncover challenges and opportunities for creating a healthcare system that balances modern and traditional practices. This approach would provide insights into how traditional medicine can be recognized and supported within a national framework while preserving its cultural integrity and ensuring equitable healthcare access for all.

The study aimed to understand traditional medicine practitioners' perspectives on promoting health in communities. Specifically, it examined their views on the role of traditional medicine in promoting health and their perceptions of its value in improving community health practices.

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on the Cultural Competence Theory by Campinha-Bacote (1991). The theory underscores that healthcare systems should promote involvement and integration of the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of the community.

It further explained that culture is the learned, exchanged, and shared knowledge of a community's values, beliefs, norms, and lifestyles that directs a person or group in a consistent manner in their decisions, thoughts, and behaviors. Cultural competency, according to Campinha-Bacote (2002), is a continual process in which the healthcare professional works to become proficient in working within the client's cultural environment. In order for this model to be successful, health care providers must believe that they are developing cultural competence rather than possessing it already. This continuous process implies that nurses are engaged in an educational process that never ends and that teaches them about cultural differences. It includes the following components: cultural awareness, knowledge, skill, encounters, and desire.

The Cultural Competence Theory is particularly relevant to this study in that it provides a lens through which the integration of traditional medicine, deeply rooted within cultural identities, can be meaningfully folded into a national healthcare system. It underscores the significance of cultural knowledge, having a grasp of the traditional practice and what it means for the community, and cultural skill, to incorporate this knowledge into healthcare delivery without compromising quality or safety. Additionally, such cultural encounters with traditional practitioners and community members create channels for mutual understanding and collaboration, to ensure that integration efforts are brought in line with what the community expects and values.

By applying this framework, the study can explore how healthcare systems can bridge the gaps between biomedical and traditional practices in ensuring that the integration process respects and strengthens cultural heritage while enhancing access to care. This approach ensures that the integration strategies do not only cover the health disparities, but go ahead to promote trust, acceptance, and long-term sustainability within the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Value of Traditional Medicine in Promoting Health and Well-Being

Communities perceive traditional medicine as an integral part of their health and well-being due to its cultural relevance and accessibility. Affordability, religious affiliation, and proximity to home were key factors influencing the preference for among communities (Million *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, Adhikari *et al.* (2022) highlighted that traditional medicine is often chosen over modern medicine due to its alignment with local cultural practices and beliefs, even as modern healthcare becomes more accessible. These findings suggest that traditional medicine remains a valuable healthcare option for communities, particularly in rural areas where modern healthcare services are limited.

Moreover, traditional medicine is often perceived as a complement to conventional medicine rather than a replacement. Many participants preferred traditional medicine for chronic conditions due to its perceived lower side effects compared to pharmaceutical drugs (Thipanyane *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, Pradipta *et al.* (2023) showed that traditional medicine users believe it enhances their quality of life by addressing physical, emotional, and spiritual health holistically. This dual approach reflects a growing trend where individuals combine traditional medicine and modern medicine to navigate their healthcare needs more effectively.

The perception and practice of traditional medicine are significantly influenced by education and knowledge transfer within communities. It was found that families play a crucial role in passing down knowledge about traditional remedies, with many respondents reporting that they learned about traditional medicine from family members (Tuasha *et al.*, 2023). This intergenerational transfer of knowledge is vital for preserving traditional practices, yet younger generations often exhibit less interest in these practices due to modernization and changing societal roles (Ouma, 2022). Such a generational gap poses a challenge to preserving traditional knowledge and practices that have been passed down for centuries.

Educational initiatives can address this gap by promoting awareness of traditional medicine's benefits and historical significance. For example, community workshops in Ethiopia have successfully increased awareness about the safe use of herbal medicines among younger populations (Workneh, 2018). Additionally, integrating traditional medicine education into school curricula has been suggested as a way to foster appreciation for traditional practices while ensuring their relevance in contemporary healthcare systems (Kala, 2017). Such efforts can help bridge the gap between traditional and modern healthcare practices while preserving valuable cultural heritage.

Traditional medicine is deeply intertwined with cultural heritage and community identity. Bautista-Valarezo *et al.* (2021), views traditional medicine as spiritual exercises that restore energy balance and strengthen emotional well-being. This holistic approach aligns closely with indigenous worldviews that consider health as a balance between physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Similarly, Wanjohi (2020) found that individuals who engage in traditional healing practices report a stronger sense of belonging and connection to their cultural roots validation.

Research also highlights the importance of respecting cultural diversity when integrating traditional medicine into national health systems. In Nepal, communities expressed a desire for policies that acknowledge the cultural significance of traditional medicine while ensuring its safety and efficacy through scientific validation (Bhandari *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, in Ghana, about 70% of the population relies on traditional medicine for their primary healthcare needs, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to effectively integrate traditional medicine into the national health system (Kenu *et al.*, 2021).

Despite its perceived value, traditional medicine faces several challenges that impact its integration into modern healthcare systems. One significant issue is the lack of regulation surrounding traditional medicine practices and products. Zhang *et al.* (2021), revealed that unregulated herbal remedies can lead to adverse health outcomes due to contamination or improper usage. Additionally, there is often limited documentation on traditional healing methods, which hinders efforts to scientifically validate their efficacy

(Ijaz & Boon, 2018). Another challenge is the stigma associated with using traditional medicine among certain populations who may view it as inferior to modern medicine.

Communities recognize traditional medicine's role in promoting health and well-being. However, research in urban areas shows that some individuals prefer conventional treatments due to their perceived scientific credibility (Mok *et al.*, 2019). To address this, regulatory frameworks must ensure safety while respecting the cultural values associated with traditional medicine (Alshammari *et al.*, 2024).

Accessibility plays a crucial role in the utilization of traditional medicine within communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas. In rural Ethiopia, Orellana-Paucar *et al.* (2021), found that the proximity of traditional healers significantly influenced individuals' choices to seek traditional medicine for health issues, as many participants cited convenience as a primary. Similarly, research in India indicated that when modern healthcare facilities are distant or unaffordable, communities often rely on traditional medicine as their first line of treatment (Haleem *et al.*, 2021). This reliance underscores the importance of traditional medicine in providing accessible healthcare options, especially for populations with limited access to conventional medical services. Furthermore, the World Health Organization (2023) emphasizes that traditional medicine remains a critical resource for health care in many regions, particularly where modern healthcare infrastructure is lacking.

Cultural and Spiritual Beliefs' Influence on Traditional Medicine

Cultural and spiritual beliefs significantly shape community attitudes toward traditional medicine. Personal experiences and familial networks heavily influence perceptions, with many individuals relying on traditional practices due to cultural trust and accessibility (Chali *et al.*, 2021). Despite the rise of modern healthcare systems, traditional medicine remains relevant, especially in rural areas where access to conventional healthcare is limited. According to the study of Maramba-Lazarte (2020), the Philippine government has recognized the importance of integrating traditional medicine into the national healthcare framework through policies such as the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Act of 1997.

Additionally, Mok *et al.* (2019) states that traditional medicine into national healthcare systems involves recognizing its role in primary care and universal health coverage. Community perspectives highlight that traditional medicine often fills gaps left by conventional healthcare, driven by cultural trust and accessibility. Successful integration requires grassroots involvement, regulatory frameworks, and education for practitioners (Park *et al.*, 2019).

Cultural beliefs shape how communities perceive the causes of illness. For instance, in certain cultures, diseases may be attributed to supernatural forces, such as witchcraft or evil spirits (Winiger, 2022). This belief leads individuals to prefer traditional medicine for conditions that are perceived to be caused by these supernatural elements, rather than seeking conventional medicine (Ngere *et al.*, 2022).

Spirituality plays a crucial role in traditional medicine, where healing practices are often combined with spiritual therapies. Many individuals seek out traditional healers not only for herbal remedies but also

for spiritual guidance and healing (Ahmed *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, religious affiliation often reinforces the use of traditional medicine, as seen in various studies where affordability and cultural identity play crucial roles in healthcare choices (Febriyanti *et al.*, 2024).

Traditional medicine is often embedded in cultural norms and practices. For instance, caregivers in Kenya prefer traditional remedies for illnesses attributed to supernatural causes, such as witchcraft, highlighting the importance of local beliefs in healthcare decisions (Ngere *et al.*, 2022). Many communities view health as a balance between physical and spiritual well-being, leading to the integration of spiritual healing alongside herbal treatments. The legacy of colonialism has also shaped attitudes, with traditional medicine serving as a means of cultural identity and resistance against Western medical dominance. This context fosters a perception of traditional practices as holistic and culturally relevant alternatives to biomedicine (Winiger, 2022).

Moreover, some studies or policies may reflect ethnocentric attitudes, portraying traditional medicine as inferior or as a relic of pre-scientific thought. These bias risks undermining its cultural and spiritual significance while favoring biomedical frameworks (WHO, 2023). Studies often simplify diverse spiritual practices into generic categories, losing the nuanced understanding of specific cultural contexts. For instance, Pigg's critique highlights how local healers' practices are homogenized into broad labels like "traditional beliefs," erasing their unique ritual significance (Winiger, 2022).

Traditional medicine lacks standardized dosages and regulatory frameworks, which can lead to incomplete or incorrect information about its practices and efficacy (Chali *et al.*, 2021). Traditional healers may hold significant authority in their communities, which can affect clients' willingness to seek biomedical care or adhere to treatment recommendations. This aspect is crucial for understanding the complexities of health-seeking behavior. The influence of clients' backgrounds, such as socioeconomic status, education, and prior experiences with healthcare on their interactions with traditional healers is often inadequately addressed, limiting the applicability of findings across diverse populations (Kazamwali, 2024).

Many communities attribute illnesses to spiritual causes, such as witchcraft or breaches of cultural taboos. This belief system leads to a preference for traditional healing methods that address these spiritual dimensions, particularly for conditions perceived as supernatural in origin (Ngere *et al.*, 2022). Traditional medicine is often viewed as more accessible and affordable compared to conventional healthcare, particularly in rural areas. This perception is reinforced by the belief that traditional remedies are effective for various ailments, leading to their continued use even when biomedical options are available (WHO, 2023).

Traditional healing practices are deeply intertwined with Filipino cultural identity. The belief that plants are nature's gifts further emphasizes the cultural connection to medicinal practices (Candilada, 2023). Traditional medicine serves as a vital expression of Filipino cultural identity. Practices are deeply rooted in local folklore, mythology, and ancestral knowledge, reflecting community values and beliefs. For instance, the practice of hilot, a traditional massage technique used for healing, embodies this connection by integrating physical manipulation with cultural rituals (Latam *et al.*, 2020).

Legesse *et al.* (2023) states the affordability of traditional medicine compared to conventional healthcare makes it a preferred choice for individuals and families facing financial constraints in many low- and middle-income countries. This economic advantage is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where access to modern healthcare facilities may be limited, and transportation costs can further burden families seeking conventional. Additionally, during economic downturns or crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, communities have increasingly turned to traditional medicine as a more accessible and affordable alternative for managing health issues (Filip *et al.*, 2022). The perception of traditional medicine as both cost-effective and culturally relevant reinforces its continued use among populations that prioritize economic considerations in their healthcare choices.

Expectations for Policies in Promoting Traditional Medicine

Communities expect governments to recognize and integrate traditional medicine into national health systems. The World Health Organization (2023) emphasizes that traditional medicine should be part of universal health coverage to improve health outcomes and respect cultural traditions. The 2018 Declaration of Astana reinforced this by acknowledging the importance of incorporating traditional medicine knowledge into primary healthcare delivery systems (PAHO, 2024).

Ensuring the safety and quality of traditional medicine practices is a priority for communities. Governments are expected to implement regulatory frameworks that standardize herbal medicines and ensure the qualifications of practitioners. Studies highlight the importance of pharmacovigilance systems to monitor traditional medicine products and prevent the circulation of substandard remedies. For instance, Legesse *et al.* (2023) emphasized the need for safety regulations due to the widespread use of traditional medicine for primary care needs. Additionally, the World Health Organization underscores the significance of integrating traditional medicine into national health policies to enhance patient safety and efficacy. The WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014–2023 aims to support Member States in developing proactive policies and implementing action plans that will strengthen the role traditional medicine plays in keeping populations healthy (von Schoen-Angerer *et al.*, 2023).

Moreover, communities often rely on traditional medicine due to its affordability and accessibility, particularly in rural areas where modern healthcare services are limited. A phenomenological study conducted in the Philippines highlighted that folk medicine is frequently sought by individuals who distrust the current healthcare system or cannot afford conventional treatments (Rondilla *et al.*, 2021). This reliance is also tied to family traditions and satisfaction with prior experiences (International Journal of Medical Students, 2021). Similarly, traditional medicine practices in Southeast Asia, such as Thai herbal medicines and massages, continue to play a significant role in healthcare due to their cultural relevance and cost-effectiveness. In Thailand, these practices are even covered under certain health benefit plans, making them more accessible to the population (Sumriddetchkajorn *et al.*, 2019)

Communities want assurance that practitioners are trained and that products meet safety standards. The WHO advocates for robust regulatory frameworks to ensure the quality of traditional medicine practices and products, which includes establishing guidelines for herbal medicines and training programs for

practitioners (Kasilo *et al.*, 2019). Respecting cultural diversity is a critical expectation among communities regarding government policies. Traditional medicine often embodies cultural heritage, and policies should reflect this by promoting community involvement in health decision-making processes. Engaging local populations ensures that healthcare services are culturally appropriate and responsive to community needs (Park & Canaway, 2019).

Communities demand regulations to ensure the safety and efficacy of traditional medicine. The World Health Organization (2023) advocates for robust frameworks to regulate practices, standardize products, and train practitioners. For example, Ethiopia faces challenges with weak enforcement and inadequate legal frameworks for regulating herbal medicines (Nzimande *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, there is a growing demand for evidence-based policies that ensure the safety and efficacy of traditional medicine practices.

Stakeholders advocate for regulatory frameworks that not only protect public health but also respect the cultural significance of these practices. Successful integration requires collaboration between traditional practitioners and conventional healthcare providers, fostering an environment where both systems can coexist and complement each other. This approach is expected to lead to improved health outcomes and greater public trust in the healthcare system (Pathwardan *et al.*, 2023). For instance, Yoshino *et al.* (2023) discuss the integration of traditional medicine with conventional biomedicine in Japan, highlighting the importance of such collaboration in enhancing patient care.

There is a growing demand for evidence-based policies that support the integration of traditional medicine into mainstream healthcare. Such policies should focus on training practitioners, ensuring quality control, and fostering collaboration between traditional and conventional healthcare providers. According to Zhang *et al.* (2024), integrating traditional medicine requires robust scientization processes, including clinical trials and practitioner training programs, to ensure safety and efficacy. Similarly, Patwardhan *et al.* (2023) argue that integrating traditional medicine into national health systems can contribute to achieving universal health coverage by addressing gaps in healthcare accessibility while maintaining cultural relevance. These studies highlight the importance of evidence-based approaches to build public trust in traditional medicine practices and products.

Additionally, The Ghanaian experience illustrates this need, as participants in studies highlighted both the benefits of integrating traditional medicine for improved patient outcomes and the challenges posed by a lack of visibility and coordination among practitioners. A study by Ampomah *et al.* (2023) emphasized that governments must facilitate better interprofessional relationships between traditional and modern healthcare providers to improve patient care outcomes. Similarly, Gbadebo *et al.* (2024) noted that integrating traditional medicine into African healthcare systems requires addressing challenges such as unregulated practices and a lack of standardization while promoting collaboration among practitioners. These findings underscore community expectations for governments to develop policies that enhance the integration of traditional medicine into national health systems while ensuring its safety and efficacy.

Beyond safety regulations and integration into healthcare systems, communities also expect governments to support research and development efforts for traditional medicine. Scientific validation of traditional healing practices can enhance their credibility and acceptance within mainstream healthcare. Several studies highlight the importance of government-funded research initiatives aimed at testing the efficacy and safety of traditional remedies (Wang *et al.*, 2023). Similarly, India has strengthened the role of Ayurveda by establishing regulatory bodies and funding research institutions dedicated to traditional medicine (Patwardhan *et al.*, 2022). These cases demonstrate that governmental support for research and development can help bridge the gap between traditional and modern healthcare, ensuring that traditional medicine remains a viable and respected healthcare option.

Furthermore, communities expect healthcare policies to promote accessibility and affordability of traditional medicine services. Governments can support traditional medicine practitioners by offering official recognition and financial assistance, such as subsidizing herbal medicines or providing insurance coverage for traditional healing services. For instance, the Thai government has incorporated traditional medicine into its Universal Health Coverage scheme, making traditional therapies more widely available to citizens (Sumriddetchkajorn *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, in Ghana, the government has implemented policies to integrate traditional medicine into primary healthcare centers, ensuring that local communities can access traditional treatments alongside modern medical services (Ampomah *et al.*, 2023). These measures reflect the expectation that governments should not only regulate traditional medicine but also ensure its accessibility and affordability, particularly for marginalized populations.

METHODS

Research Design

In this study, the researchers employed a descriptive phenomenology research design. It is a research that aims to describe the characteristics of a population, situation, or particular phenomenon. The method focuses on providing an in-depth understanding of what exists, how it occurs, and why it happens, without manipulating any variables. Through this method, the researchers can gather factual information and interpret it to identify patterns, trends, and relationships relevant to the study. (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). In this study, a descriptive research design was used to understand the community's perspective on practicing traditional medicine.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of the participants. Turner (2018) states that it is used when researchers prefer to focus on particular individuals who possess qualities that are of relevance to the study. In this study, 5 individuals that are traditional practitioners, employed and unemployed participants within the Municipality of Malita, Davao Occidental were chosen for the study to share their perspectives on practicing traditional medicine.

Research Participants

Participants in the study includes five (5) traditional practitioners and both employed and unemployed individuals. Participants must meet the following requirements in order to be considered for inclusion: they must be of legal age, regardless of gender; they must be traditional practitioners with at least 2 to 3 years of experience and be actively practicing traditional medicine; and they must be aware of local traditional medicine practices. Participants who are not participants in the community under study or who are not familiar with local traditional medicine practices and those who show objections to providing their opinions or who are unable or unwilling to provide informed consent are not suitable for the study and should be excluded.

Research Instrument

In-depth interview was used to gather quantitative data from participants using a semi-structured interview guide questionnaire. In order to explore the experiences, practices, and insights acquired by the participants, it comprises two (2) open-ended research questions, two (2) main questions, and two (2) probing questions. Additionally, the questionnaires were sent to the adviser for review and to the three specialists for validation in order to guarantee the authenticity of the instrument. In-depth interviews were used because they allow researchers to obtain detailed explanations of participants' experiences and perspectives, which cannot be captured through structured surveys alone (Creswell, 2014).

Research Locale

This research was conducted within the Municipality of Malita, Davao Occidental, specifically Barangay Kidalapong which was selected due to its diversified population, which includes both medical professionals and practitioners of traditional medicine. These barangay is the ideal location to investigate the integration of both systems because a significant proportion of the population uses traditional medicine due to limited access to existing healthcare facilities. Participants in this field, who have a close relationship with healthcare and community well-being, also offer valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of this type of integration.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study was analyzed using theme analysis, as stated by Braun and Clarke (2006). The researchers would employ a systematic six-phase process to identify, examine, and present themes in the qualitative information gathered from interviews.

Specifically, Phase 1 - Familiarization with the Data; Phase 2 - Creating Initial Codes and Categories; Phase 3 - Searching for Themes; Phase 4 - Reviewing themes; Phase 5 - Defining and Naming Themes; Phase 6 - Producing the report. The first phase involves transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews in order to become more familiar with the data. This was followed by several readings to obtain a thorough comprehension. The purpose of taking preliminary notes is to find possible patterns and meanings. During the second phase, the researchers created preliminary codes by methodically categorizing important data

elements. Without interpretation, these codes were used as a way to arrange information into relevant categories.

In the third stage, themes are found by reviewing over and classifying codes that capture more general ideas related to the study objectives. In order to create preliminary themes, the researchers actively interpreted the connections between the codes. To ensure their accuracy and coherence, the themes that have been found was compared to the complete data set in the fourth phase. Any discrepancies, overlaps, or contradictions were resolved, and any necessary improvements was implemented. In the fifth phase, the topics are defined and given names to make sure they are relevant and descriptive. The researchers clearly explained the importance of each issue by explaining its significance within the context of the study. In the sixth and final stage, the researchers presented their findings along with supporting citations and discussions in a thorough report. The viewpoints of the community regarding the practice of traditional medicine was addressed in this paper. Thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke, provided a methodical and thorough approach in finding important themes and patterns in the qualitative data.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers followed several data-gathering procedures to obtain valid and reliable information, as stated below.

To begin, the researchers obtained a letter of approval from the research adviser and school principal to formally conduct the study. The goal of this phase is to formally collaborate and gain access to important sources. Thirdly, to ensure respondents' voluntary participation, informed consent forms was also administered. The study's objectives, research methods, possible risks and benefits, and participants' rights, such as confidentiality and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time, were explained to them. Fourth, in-depth interviews were used to collect data from a selected group of participants, which included community members and traditional healers. To guarantee consistency in the questions, an interview guide questionnaire was employed. To maintain data collecting accuracy, the sessions was voice recorded and documented. Finally, in order to process the data, the responses of the participants were methodically gathered, transcribed, and documented. To gather valuable insights about community perspectives on practicing traditional medicine, the collected data was analyzed, validated, interpreted, and evaluated.

Trustworthiness of the Study

In order to guarantee the research's accuracy and trustworthiness, the researchers utilized a number of techniques to build reliability.

Credibility. Triangulating data sources and guaranteeing extended participant engagement would build the study's credibility. To validate findings, the researchers would conduct documentation reviews and in-depth interviews.

Confirmability. Findings were based on participant perspectives rather than individual opinions in order to preserve impartiality and remove bias. To ensure transparency, audit trails would b kept that detail

the study procedure, data gathering techniques, and analytic strategies. Direct quotes from participants and verbatim transcriptions were used to further support the responses' authenticity.

Dependability. The research design and technique were carefully documented and adhered to systematically in order to guarantee the consistency of the study. To guarantee consistency and dependability, a peer debriefing procedure was used, in which other researchers examined the study's methodology and conclusions. Additionally, using standardized interview guides guarantee consistency in the way data is gathered.

Transferability. Transferability was guaranteed by offering detailed, comprehensive explanations of the research environment, participants, and conclusions, even if qualitative research does not aim for generalizability in the same manner as quantitative studies. This would make it possible for other researchers and individuals to evaluate the study's findings' applicability and relevance to comparable situations, especially in other areas where traditional medicine is being incorporated into healthcare systems.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration was considered in the conduct of this study to address the following ethical concerns:

Voluntary Participation. There was no pressure or coercion to participate in this study; participation was completely voluntary. Participants was free to withdraw at any time without incurring charges.

Informed Consent. Participants get thorough details about the study's objectives, methods, possible risks, and advantages prior to data collection. In order to confirm that they are aware of their rights and obligations, they signed an informed consent form.

Falsification of Documents. By making sure that all information gathered and results are appropriately presented, the study, strictly adhere to academic truthfulness. Any data manipulation, falsification, or misrepresentation was severely prohibited and addressed in accordance with ethical standards.

Plagiarism. Originality and accurate citation of all sources utilized was guaranteed by the research. To prevent academic dishonesty, any concepts, conclusions, or assertions that are taken from other works was appropriately cited. Tools for detecting plagiarism was used to preserve the integrity of the research.

Authorship. The content of this paper was acknowledged by authors who have significantly contributed to its conception, data gathering, analysis, and writing. All contributors received the proper acknowledgment, guaranteeing equity and openness in the distribution of credit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community Views on the Role of Traditional Medicine in Promoting Health

The findings related to the community views on the role of traditional medicine in promoting health were presented in Table 1. Based on the interview results, three (3) major themes were gleaned and categorized as the following: accessibility and necessity of traditional medicine with the core ideas of essential in areas without access to doctors and importance and usefulness of traditional medicine, healing effectiveness of traditional remedies with core ideas of effectiveness of traditional remedies and herbal medicine provides relief, and proper and natural use of traditional medicine with the core ideas of proper adherence to treatment and traditional medicines are natural.

Moreover, these themes demonstrate that traditional medicine remains highly relevant in the community, not only for addressing common health concerns but also for preserving cultural practices and transmitting knowledge across generations. This underscores its dual role as both a health resource and a cultural heritage. Meanwhile, the frequency of response was measured in the following: General (50%), Variant (21-49%), Typical (20%) (San Jose, 2022).

Table 1 *Themes and Core Ideas on the Community Views on the Role of Traditional Medicine in Promoting Health*

MAJOR THEMES	CORE IDEAS	FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES
Accessibility and Necessity of Traditional Medicine	• Essential in areas without access to doctors	Variant
	• Importance and usefulness of traditional medicine	Variant
Healing Effectiveness of Traditional Remedies	• Effectiveness of traditional remedies	General
	• Herbal medicine provides relief	Typical
Proper and natural use of Traditional Medicine	• Proper adherence to treatment	Variant
	• Traditional medicines are natural	Typical

Accessibility and Necessity of Traditional Medicine

The first theme generated in the study was the accessibility and necessity of traditional medicine, which revolved around the core ideas emphasizing that traditional medicine is essential in areas without access to doctors and highlights the importance and usefulness of traditional healing practices. Specifically, traditional medicine serves as a primary source of healthcare for populations living in rural and underserved communities where modern medical services are limited, unavailable, or difficult to reach. According to the World Health Organization (2019), a large proportion of the population in developing countries relies on traditional medicine for their basic healthcare needs due to its accessibility, affordability, and cultural acceptance. Further, traditional medicine plays an important role in promoting holistic health by addressing physical, emotional, and social well-being, making it a valuable complement to conventional healthcare systems (Bodeker & Kronenberg, 2017). Despite advancements in modern medicine, traditional healing practices remain relevant and useful, particularly in managing common illnesses and providing immediate care when professional medical assistance is inaccessible. The continued use of traditional medicine also reflects community trust and the preservation of indigenous knowledge, which strengthens local healthcare practices and supports overall community health outcomes (WHO, 2019).

Essential in Areas Without Access to Doctors

During the IDI, participants shared that traditional medicine becomes essential when doctors and hospitals are not easily accessible:

“Sa una nga panahon wala man jud mga doctor, mao nga ang mga tawo muduol jud sa tradisyonal nga medisina.”

“In the past, there were no doctors, which is why people relied on traditional medicine.”
(P3)

“Kung naa ka sa bukid, wala jud kay makita nga mga doctor mao ang tradisyonal nga tambal ray magamit.”

“If you are in the mountains, there are no doctors available, so only traditional medicine can be used.” (P1)

This implies that the respondents consider traditional medicine as an essential and reliable source of healthcare, particularly in communities where access to medical doctors and modern health facilities is limited or nonexistent. Their statements reflect real-life conditions in rural and mountainous areas where geographic isolation and lack of infrastructure prevent people from seeking formal medical care. In these situations, traditional medicine becomes the primary option for treating common illnesses because it is readily available, affordable, and familiar to community members. The continued use of traditional remedies shows how people depend on indigenous knowledge systems to meet their basic health needs.

Utilizing traditional medicine in daily life can have a significant impact on health outcomes. This may include seeking remedies from local healers or using plant-based treatments for common ailments, which are essential for promoting both physical and mental well-being. The reliance on traditional medicine

demonstrates its importance in improving health access and promoting equity, particularly in resource-limited settings (Smith, Luxon, & Philip, 2016). Integrating traditional medicine into health strategies has been recognized as a way to strengthen primary care and ensure that communities receive timely and culturally appropriate health services (Sanghamitra & Panda, 2020).

Importance and Usefulness of Traditional Medicine

Another participants shared their perspective on the importance and usefulness of traditional medicine during IDI, as they said that:

“Dako gyud ang bili nga akong gihatag sa tradisyonal nga tambal... labi na kung walay access sa ospital o moderno nga tambal.”

“I place great value on traditional medicine, especially when there is no access to hospitals or modern medicine.” (P2)

“Para sa akoa, dili man jud mag parehas ang mga tao, dako jud matabang ang tradisyonal na mga medisina.”

“For me, people are not all the same, but traditional medicines are truly a great help.” (P4)

The participants of the study made first use of traditional medicine in places where doctors and modern healthcare facilities were not easily accessible in order to make sure that healthcare would be available in their towns. They made a decision about which health practices to use first in order to treat common ailments and keep themselves well. Health outcomes in areas with limited resources would be better if traditional medicine was available and practiced. It could be pretty difficult to get basic health services in rural or underdeveloped areas because of the long distances, high costs, and few formal health providers. This is particularly true if the formal healthcare professionals are far away or not present at all.

Using natural healing methods in the community as the primary source of health care is a strategy that makes health care delivery easy and accepted by the culture among the people residing in the area with less health facilities (WHO, 2019). Moreover, it is equally important to mention that the practice of traditional medicine is a pointer to and enhancing of modern healthcare systems especially when the latter is not adequate; it accommodates local needs and cultural practices which thereby building trust and usage among the community members (Farnsworth et al., 2019). By giving priority to traditional medicine, people are able to save both time and money while still having the doctors arrive on time to treat the illnesses. Hence, they are able to have and enjoy health notwithstanding and due to the unobtrusive nature of formal health services (Abdul-Razak et al., 2021).

Healing Effectiveness of Traditional Medicine

The second theme that emerged strongly from the participants' narratives was the healing effectiveness of traditional medicine, particularly through the core ideas that traditional remedies are effective and that herbal medicine provides relief. These core ideas reflect the community's lived experiences of symptom improvement, recovery from common illnesses, and sustained trust in traditional healing practices. The repeated accounts of relief from ailments such as cough, colds, wounds, and body pain indicate that effectiveness is not merely perceived but is grounded in consistent positive outcomes observed over time.

Effectiveness of Traditional Remedies

The second theme from the study was the healing effectiveness of traditional medicine, particularly through the core ideas that traditional remedies are effective and that herbal medicine provides relief

In support to this finding, the participants emphasized the effectiveness of traditional remedies, as they said:

““Kanang mga tradisyonal na tambal, makaayo jud na sa lawas sa tao.”“

“Those traditional medicines are really beneficial to the human body.” (P4)

““Para sa akoo, mas epektibo ang mga herbal na pagtambal.”

“For me, herbal treatments are more effective.” (P3)

““Sa akong kasinatian, epektibo ang tradisyonal nga tambal sa pipila ka mga sakit sama sa sip-on, ubo, samad, ug uban pa.”

“In my experience, traditional medicine is effective for some illnesses such as colds, coughs, wounds, and others.” (P2)

“Sa akoo, mas epektibo gyud ang herbal nga pagtambal. Kay bisan sa among kasinatian, daghan na ang natabangan niini, labi na sa mga kasagarang sakit.”

”For me, herbal treatment is truly more effective because, based on our experience, it has already helped many people, especially with common illnesses.” (P5)

Traditional medicine's healing effectiveness is often attributed to the bioactive compounds present in medicinal plants, which have been scientifically shown to possess anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, analgesic, and immunomodulatory properties. According to Ekor (2016), many traditional remedies exert genuine pharmacological effects, supporting their role in primary healthcare, especially for common and non-life-threatening conditions. This aligns with the participants' claims that herbal medicines are effective for everyday illnesses, reinforcing why effectiveness surfaced as a central theme.

Moreover, the theme is reinforced by the holistic nature of traditional medicine, which addresses not only physical symptoms but also emotional and cultural dimensions of healing. The World Health Organization (2019) emphasizes that traditional medicine contributes to well-being by integrating physical

relief with cultural meaning and community trust. This holistic approach enhances patient confidence and adherence, which may further improve perceived and actual treatment outcomes. Participants' statements that relief is felt when traditional remedies are used properly support this explanation.

Another reason this theme emerged is the contextual reliability of traditional medicine in resource-limited settings. In communities with limited access to doctors or pharmaceuticals, traditional medicine becomes a dependable and immediate source of care. James et al. (2018) note that repeated successful use of traditional remedies strengthens community belief in their effectiveness, transforming individual experiences into shared knowledge. This collective validation explains why participants consistently described traditional medicine as "effective" rather than experimental.

Lastly, the emphasis on proper use within participants' responses suggests that effectiveness is closely linked to correct preparation, dosage, and frequency. This supports Tilburt and Kaptchuk's (2016) argument that traditional medicine's therapeutic value is maximized when cultural knowledge and proper practice are respected. Thus, the theme of healing effectiveness was generated not only because remedies work, but because communities understand how and when to use them.

Herbal Medicine Provides Relief

In support to the finding, this participant shared his perspective on how herbal medicine provides relief, as he stated:

"Maayo, unya naay alibyo ang mga herbal na butang." "Herbal remedies are good and provide relief." (P1)

The relief provided by herbal medicine is also reinforced by its perceived gentleness and lower incidence of adverse effects when used properly. Many individuals prefer herbal remedies because they are viewed as natural and less harsh on the body, making them suitable for repeated or early-stage use (Tilburt & Kaptchuk, 2016). This perception encourages consistent use, which in turn increases the likelihood of symptom relief and strengthens community confidence in herbal medicine.

Furthermore, relief is not limited to physical symptoms alone. Herbal medicine often provides psychological and emotional comfort, as its use is deeply embedded in cultural familiarity and ancestral knowledge. James et al. (2018) emphasize that culturally trusted healing practices enhance patients' sense of security and well-being, which can positively influence perceived health outcomes. This holistic form of relief, physical, emotional, and cultural, helps explain why participants repeatedly emphasized the comforting and relieving effects of herbal treatments.

Overall, the core idea that herbal medicine provides relief emerged strongly because participants experienced tangible symptom improvement, trusted the natural properties of herbs, and benefited from the immediate and culturally meaningful nature of traditional healing. These factors collectively justify the generation of the theme healing effectiveness of traditional medicine and affirm the continued relevance of herbal medicine in community health practices.

Proper and natural use of Traditional Medicine

The third theme was proper and natural use of traditional medicine, which comprised core ideas such as proper adherence to treatment and the belief that traditional medicines are natural. This implies that individuals who rely on traditional medicine understand the importance of following correct preparation methods, recommended dosages, and guidance from experienced traditional healers. Proper adherence to treatment helps ensure effectiveness and minimizes potential risks. Additionally, traditional medicines are perceived as natural because they are primarily derived from herbs, plants, and other natural resources, making them more acceptable and trusted within many communities.

In addition to these beliefs, several factors influence the safe and effective use of traditional medicine, including cultural knowledge, community practices, and health education. According to the World Health Organization (2019), traditional medicine remains widely used across the world, but its benefits are best achieved when users practice proper adherence and are informed about correct usage. Failure to follow appropriate treatment guidelines may lead to reduced effectiveness or adverse health outcomes.

Furthermore, the perception of traditional medicine as natural contributes to its continued and widespread use. Studies indicate that many individuals prefer traditional remedies because they believe these treatments have fewer side effects compared to conventional medicines (Oyebode et al., 2016). However, recent research emphasizes that even natural remedies require responsible use and proper understanding to ensure safety (Welz et al., 2018). Thus, the proper and informed use of traditional medicine supports health and well-being while preserving cultural practices and promoting safe treatment behaviors.

Proper Adherence to Treatment

These participants emphasized that the effectiveness of traditional and herbal medicine depends largely on proper and responsible use, as they stated:

“Depende na na kung mugamit ka ug naa na sa imo kung permintihon nimo gamiton.” “It depends on how you use it, and it is up to you whether you use it continuously.” (P3)

“Makaayo kini sa lawas depende sa paggamit. Kung perming gamiton ug sakto ang pagtuman, makahatag kini og maayong epekto sa atong panglawas.” “It is beneficial to the body depending on how it is used. If it is used properly and followed correctly, it can provide positive effects on our health.” (P5)

This implies that the participants believe that the effectiveness of traditional medicine depends largely on proper use and adherence. Their statements show that traditional medicine can be beneficial to the body when used correctly and consistently, but its effects vary depending on how responsibly it is practiced. The participants emphasized personal accountability in deciding to use traditional medicine and

following proper instructions, suggesting that correct usage leads to positive health outcomes, while improper use may lessen its benefits.

Supporting these views, Payyappallimana (2018) highlighted that traditional medicine may be powerful if the users apply the cultural knowledge that has been passed down, the suitable preparation method, and the right amount. (Zhang et al., 2019) mentioned that sticking to traditional treatment methods boosts the perception of effectiveness and simultaneously eliminates the health risks linked to misuse. A systematic review done by (Musa et al., 2021) did not find the same safety and efficacy for traditional pharmaceuticals that were not properly informed and used. The mentioned studies have given more strength to the participants' experiences, and the practitioners are already saying that they would provide positive health outcomes if they are responsible for their use and have enough knowledge about it.

Traditional Medicines are Natural

Participant described traditional and herbal medicines as natural and effective, particularly for common illnesses. He emphasized that these remedies have helped many people based on their experiences and are perceived to have fewer side effects compared to synthetic medicines.

As shared by one participant:

“Sa akoo, mas epektibo gyud ang herbal nga pagtambal. Kay bisan sa among kasinatian, daghan na ang natabangan niini, labi na sa mga kasagarang sakit. Ug natural pa gyud, wala kaayo'y side effects.” “For me, herbal treatment is truly more effective because, based on our experience, it has already helped many people, especially with common illnesses. Moreover, it is natural and has fewer side effects.” (P4)

Participants associate the natural composition of traditional medicine with safety and effectiveness, particularly due to its minimal side effects. Because these remedies are perceived as gentle and compatible with the body, participants feel more confident using them for common illnesses, reinforcing their belief in the healing effectiveness of traditional medicine. The World Health Organization (2019) supports this view by explaining that traditional medicine relies on natural materials and indigenous knowledge, contributing to its continued acceptability in many communities.

Trust in natural remedies is further strengthened by observed long-term positive outcomes, as participants have witnessed repeated recovery without adverse effects. Tilburt and Kaptchuk (2016) note that natural treatments are often associated with bodily balance and harmony, which enhances adherence and perceived effectiveness. Additionally, the cultural transmission of herbal practices provides emotional reassurance, as remedies passed down through generations are viewed as both healing and culturally meaningful. James et al. (2018) emphasize that culturally grounded healing practices contribute to both psychological and physical relief. Overall, these shared experiences explain why naturalness emerged as a core idea under the theme healing effectiveness of traditional medicine.

Community Perceptions on the Value of Traditional Medicine in Promoting Health

The findings related to the community views on the value of traditional medicine in promoting health are presented in Table 2. Based on the interview results, two are (2) major themes categorized as to the following: cultural knowledge with the core ideas of traditional medicine as culture and heritage and cultural continuity, and knowledge transmission and shared experience with the core ideas of traditional healers' knowledge and competence, imparting of wisdom from elders, and sharing experiences. Moreover, the themes reflect how traditional medicine remains relevant in addressing health concerns, preserving culture, and sustaining community knowledge. Meanwhile, the frequency of response was measured in the following: General (50%), Variant (21-49%), Typical (20%) (San Jose, 2022).

Table 2. Community Views on the Value of Traditional Medicine in Promoting Health

MAJOR THEMES	CORE IDEAS	FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE
Cultural knowledge and continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional medicine as culture and heritage • Cultural continuity 	General
		Variant
Knowledge transmission and shared experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional healers' knowledge and competence 	Typical
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imparting of wisdom from elders 	Variant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing experiences 	Variant

Cultural Knowledge and Continuity

The first theme generated in the study was the cultural knowledge and continuity of traditional medicine which revolved around the core ideas Evidence-based integration further supports cultural preservation, as "TM integration supports cultural preservation, acknowledging the importance of traditional knowledge and wisdom. TM systems also offer additional tools", linking heritage to global health transformation (Patwardhan, 2023). Philippine folk medicine exemplifies phenomenological continuity, defined as "traditional health knowledge and healing practices anchored on indigenous beliefs regarding body physiology and health preservation", reliant on lived cultural experiences (Rondilla, 2021).

Traditional Medicine as Culture and Heritage

During the In-Depth Interviews (IDI), participants emphasized that traditional medicine becomes particularly essential in situations where access to doctors or hospitals is limited. They noted that knowledge of traditional remedies has been passed down through generations, enabling communities to continue using these practices effectively.

“Kaniadto ang among mga kanunununan, among mga lolo lola saunang panahon kahibalo pud sila manambal. Siguro, gibilin nila sa amoa ilang mga nahibal-an aron pud makatabang pud mi sa mga katawhan nga mga naulahi pud sa amoa.”

“In the past, our ancestors, our grandparents, knew how to heal. They probably passed on their knowledge to us so that we could also help those in the community who were in need.” (P3)

“Ang kasaysayan sa tradisyonal, kung tumanon lang nimo imong paggamit sa tradisyunal, naa juy alibyo.”

“The history of traditional medicine shows that if you follow the proper use of these remedies, they provide relief.” (P2)

“Dako gyud ang bili nga akong gihatag sa tradisyonal nga tambal. Kini ang among kasaligan labi na kung walay access sa ospital o moderno nga tambal. Sa among komunidad, padayon gihapon ang paggamit niini tungod kay nakita namo nga epektibo ug lig-on na kaayo ang kasaysayan sa paggamit niini.”

“I place great value on traditional medicine. It is our trusted resource, especially when there is no access to hospitals or modern medicine. In our community, its use continues because we have seen that it is effective and has a long history of reliable practice.” (P4)

This implies that the respondents strongly imply a deep-rooted cultural reverence for traditional medicine as an enduring family and communal legacy, emphasizing intergenerational transmission of healing knowledge from ancestors to descendants for the welfare of future generations. They highlight continuity and reliability, portraying traditional remedies as a trusted fallback when modern healthcare is inaccessible, backed by proven historical efficacy and communal validation over time. Additionally, the warnings underscore the risks of superficial or disrespectful, stressing that true legitimacy demands authentic adherence to traditional protocols and cultural context, thereby positioning these practices not just as alternatives but as vital, resilient pillars of community health and identity.

Costa-Font, Sato (2024) study on the "herbal medicine paradox" explains this endurance through deeply rooted cultural attitudes that transcend generations and borders, stating, "Attitudes towards the use of herbal treatments are culturally persistent, namely associated with cultural reference points that migrant individuals hold from their sending country.

Cultural Continuity

Another participant shared that traditional medicine is not only a health practice but also an integral part of their cultural heritage. They emphasized that the knowledge of these remedies is passed down from elders and that sharing this knowledge helps to preserve and continue cultural wisdom for future generations.

“Ang tradisyonal nga tambal usa na gyud ka parte sa among kultura. Gitudlo kini sa mga katigulangan, ug ako mismo nagpadayon og share sa uban. Sa akong panan-aw, ang bili niini dili lang pang-tambal, kundi simbolo pud sa atong kaagi ug kaalam nga angay ampingan ug ipasa sa sunod nga henerasyon.”

“Traditional medicine is truly a part of our culture. It was taught by our elders, and I continue to share it with others. In my view, its value is not only as a treatment but also as a symbol of our history and knowledge, which should be preserved and passed on to the next generation.” (P1)

“Ang tradisyonal nga tambal kabahin gyud sa atong kultura. Ako mismo nag-share sa akong mga kasinatian sa paggamit niini sa uban nga nanginahanglan. Paagi na kini sa pagpadayon sa kaalam sa atong mga katigulangan..”

“Traditional medicine is a key part of our culture. I personally share my experiences in using it with others in need. This is a way of continuing the wisdom of our elders.” (P5)

These statements strongly imply that cultural continuity of traditional medicine thrives through deliberate intergenerational transmission and communal sharing, positioning it as an inseparable thread of cultural identity and heritage rather than mere remedial practice. They emphasize traditional healing as a living legacy taught by elders ("katigulangan") and actively disseminated by individuals to peers and future generations, ensuring its preservation as a symbol of ancestral wisdom ("kaagi ug kaalam") and collective history that demands safeguarding ("ampingan ug ipasa"). This reflects a proactive cultural mechanism where personal experiences ("kasinatian") fuel ongoing dissemination, reinforcing medicine's role in sustaining community bonds and resilience, much like the oral traditions and experiential learning documented in studies on indigenous knowledge systems.

Its significance in traditional medicine manifests through intergenerational transmission and communal sharing, as evidenced by elders imparting knowledge to younger generations, ensuring its role as a vital cultural artifact beyond mere therapeutics (Costa-Font, Sato, 2024). Results show strong association between the mean herbal medicines use in the country of origin and the migrant individual herbal medicine use suggesting very strong cultural persistence for both first- and second-generation groups.

Knowledge Transmission and Shared Experience

The second theme revealed was numerous benefits, including affordability and accessibility in underserved areas, cultural relevance that enhances patient trust and adherence, and holistic approaches addressing physical, spiritual, and emotional health needs often overlooked by modern systems. Thamizoviya (2025) a global integration review emphasizes, "Integration has been recognized as a key strategy to improve access to culturally relevant and affordable healthcare, strengthen health system resilience.

Complementing this, the WHO (2023) framework notes that traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine contributes to universal health coverage by offering "safe, effective and people-centred" options that align with community beliefs and address gaps in modern services. These advantages underscore traditional medicine's role in promoting equitable, patient-centered health outcomes.

Traditional Healers' Knowledge and Competence

This participant emphasized the knowledge and skills of traditional healers in treating various illnesses, as he said;

"Kabalo man ko manambal sa mga sakit, dili man ko doctor pero kabalo ko kung unsay dapat akong itambal, ihatag na tambal sa akong mga pasyente aron ma ayo sila sa ilang mga gipang bati nga sakit." "I know how to treat illnesses. I am not a doctor, but I know what remedies to provide to my patients so that they can recover from their ailments." (P1)

The statement implies a profound confidence in experiential, intuitive knowledge of traditional healing, positioning the practitioner as a skilled, culturally legitimized healer despite lacking formal biomedical credentials like a "doctor." It underscores self-assurance in diagnosing and prescribing contextually appropriate remedies based on practical wisdom and observed efficacy, emphasizing altruistic intent to alleviate patient suffering through direct, personalized care. This reflects the essence of traditional medicine's strength in community-trusted, non-hierarchical expertise that prioritizes holistic recovery over institutionalized authority.

Traditional healers demonstrate profound knowledge and competence derived from extended apprenticeships and experiential mastery, enabling them to diagnose and prescribe remedies with confidence despite lacking formal biomedical titles. A study on preservation initiatives in Khanyile, et al., (2021).

Imparting of Wisdom from Elders

Participants highlighted the importance of traditional medicine in daily life and cultural practices. They noted that these remedies not only promote health but also help reduce stress, save money, and preserve ancestral knowledge, by stating that:

“Gihatagan namo og dakong bili ang tradisyonal nga tambal kay kabahin kini sa among kultura ug kinabuhi. Sa mga kasadpan, ang mga tigulang pa gani maoy mampo ug mogamit sa mga tanom aron tambalan ang masakiton. Maka-save sab kini og kwarta kay kasagaran anaa ra sa palibot ang mga tanom.”

“We value traditional medicine because it is part of our culture and everyday life. In the past, our elders would pray and use plants to heal the sick. It can also save money since most of the plants are available around us.” (P3)

“Tungod kay kini nga pamaagi gikan pa sa among mga katigulangan ug gi-praktis na sa kadugay na nga panahon, nagdako ko nga nagtan-aw niini isipusa ka bililhon nga parte sa among kultura.”

“Since this practice comes from our ancestors and has been used for generations, I consider it a valuable part of our culture.” (P4)

Imparting wisdom from elders forms the cornerstone of traditional medicine's cultural legitimacy and practical continuity, positioning elders as revered custodians who actively transmit time-tested practices through demonstration and storytelling, ensuring their survival as integral to daily life and identity. They highlight elders' ongoing role even in modern contexts, underscoring hands-on guidance in using accessible local plants for healing, which not only saves costs but reinforces economic and spiritual self-reliance. This elder-led transmission elevates traditional remedies to a treasured part of culture, implying a sacred duty to preserve ancestral knowledge through lived example, fostering intergenerational respect and resilience against external influences (Ouma, 2022).

This process sustains accessibility via locally abundant plants, reducing reliance on costly modern alternatives while affirming elders' authority in both spiritual invocation and physical treatment. Such transmission transforms ancestral practices into enduring treasures, cultivating communal reverence and adaptive resilience across generations.

Sharing Experiences

Another participants shared that they often experience information overload but continue to share their knowledge and experiences with others in the community. They emphasized the importance of passing on practical knowledge about traditional remedies, especially for common illnesses, as they said:

“Sa pagpalambo sa komunidad, gi-share nako sa akong mga kauban na mga katigulangan parehas nako. Gi share nako na kung halimbawa di mo kauyun sa mga bag-o nga tambal karon, kasagaran tradiyunal jud na tambal gamiton. Labaw na kung kalinturahon, mga tambal pud sa ubo.”

“In developing the community, I share with my fellow elders, just like me. I explain that if people do not prefer the new medicines today, they often use traditional remedies, especially for common ailments like coughs.” (P2)

“I-share nako sa uban akong mga experience sa uban nga naay ginabati na sakit.””
“I share my experiences with others who are feeling unwell.” (P5)

The statements imply a proactive, peer-to-peer dissemination of elder-derived wisdom within the community, where experienced practitioners share practical alternatives to modern medicine, especially for common ailments like colds and coughs, prioritizing traditional remedies when contemporary options fail or are inaccessible. This reflects a communal strategy for empowerment, leveraging personal healing experiences to guide others facing similar illnesses, thereby amplifying cultural continuity, mutual support, and self-reliance among age peers who uphold ancestral knowledge in everyday health challenges.

This peer-led transmission mirrors findings in Khanyile, et al., (2021), who describes how traditional medicinal knowledge owners preserve their knowledge through apprenticeship under the guidance of a recognised traditional medicinal knowledge owner who imparts this knowledge for many years," extending beyond formal mentorship to informal networks among contemporaries. Similarly, Ouma (2022) highlight that "an intense learning exchange process occurs between trainee and TH [traditional healer], mostly in the form of oral narrations and practices," underscoring how shared experiences foster adaptive competence within communities facing health challenges.

Summary

This study aimed to understand the community perspectives on practicing traditional medicine using descriptive research design. Specifically, it investigates the community views on the role of traditional medicine in promoting health and community perceptions of the value of traditional medicine in promoting health.

There were five (5) participants included in the study and identified using a purposive sampling technique. These participants underwent an In-depth Interview (IDI). Using thematic analysis, five (5) major themes emerged from the data regarding community perspectives on traditional medicine in promoting health. These themes are as follows: (a) Accessibility and Necessity of Traditional Medicine, with core ideas that traditional medicine is essential in areas without access to doctors and has importance and usefulness; (b) Healing Effectiveness of Traditional Remedies, with core ideas that traditional remedies are effective and that herbal medicine provides relief; (c) Proper and Natural Use of Traditional Medicine, with core ideas that there is proper adherence to treatment and that traditional medicines are natural; (d) Cultural Knowledge and Continuity, with core ideas that traditional medicine is part of culture and heritage and contributes to cultural

continuity; and (e) Knowledge Transmission and Shared Experience, with core ideas that include traditional healers' knowledge and competence, imparting of wisdom from elders, and sharing experiences.

Meanwhile, in terms of community perceptions of the value of traditional medicine in promoting health, the same themes revealed that traditional medicine is valued not only for its health benefits but also for its role in preserving culture, strengthening community identity, and promoting sustainable, accessible healthcare practices.

CONCLUSIONS

After the conduct of the In-depth Interviews (IDI), thematic analysis revealed five major themes that reflect community perspectives on traditional medicine in promoting health, namely: accessibility and necessity of traditional medicine, healing effectiveness of traditional remedies, proper and natural use of traditional medicine, cultural knowledge and continuity, and knowledge transmission and shared experience.

The findings indicate that traditional medicine plays a significant role in promoting health, particularly in communities with limited access to modern healthcare services. Traditional medicine is perceived as effective, accessible, and culturally meaningful. Moreover, its value extends beyond physical healing, as it contributes to the preservation of indigenous knowledge, cultural identity, and intergenerational learning.

Overall, the study concludes that traditional medicine remains an essential and trusted health resource within the community and continues to play a vital role in promoting holistic well-being.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings, there are several implications of the study the researcher presented in this section:

Traditional Practitioners. The findings of the study highlighted the role and contributions of traditional practitioners in healthcare, advocating their recognition and integration into formal systems. It also shed important insights on how the traditional practices can be integrative with modern medicine to make sure that they are preserved and also legitimized within the national health policies.

Community. The findings of the study allow the community to see the possible advantages and disadvantages that come with the integration of traditional medicine into the national health care systems, as well as foster community participation and collaboration to ensure that the process of integration is also infused with their cultural values, preferences, and health care needs.

Future Researchers. The study's findings would be considered a source of information in related studies concerning how traditional and modern medicine can be merged.

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