



Indigenous Healing Practices, Policies and Perceptions of Young and Elderly Ga'dang People in Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines

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Abstract

Indigenous healing practice is a very essential part of healthcare systems in rural areas in the world. Very few studies have addressed an inclusive scenario of indigenous healing practices to boost the spirit of ailing people. This study explored typical forms of indigenous healing practices, policies and perceptions of young and elderly Ga'dang (Indigenous Filipino peoples) in Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. This research utilized the descriptive-qualitative method and data gathered through community immersion, observation, focused group discussion (FGD) and face-to-face interview with the informants. Ga'dang elderly in Nueva Vizcaya apply materials and resources for indigenous healing modalities like relaxation techniques, massage (*hilot*), use of medicinal herbs, psychocultural education, cleansing ceremonies and rituals. They are forms of immediate remediation before bringing the patient to a clinic or hospital. They have been adept and continually practicing indigenous healing to help patients improve their health condition but with little value within their existing culture, especially the younger generation. Related ethnographic and qualitative researches offering wider understanding of the cultural value of indigenous healing and have impact to the lives of the people may be instigated.

Keywords: Age Group, Indigenous Healing Practices, Government Policies, Perceptions

1. Introduction

The world is facing a continuous global health crisis, troubling people especially those residing in remote areas and isolated part of rural communities and countries. Medical resources are limited but need to survive in difficult environments, accidents and emergencies using their own initiatives. Health sectors address the crisis and connect as many resources and partners as possible, but most of the time, neglected. It is in this fitting moment when indigenous healing deemed very essential part of healthcare systems. They provide first-aid remediation to affluent the spirits of ailing people before bringing the patient to the clinic or hospital. Their potential contribution in delivering immediate health services cannot be underestimated.

Indigenous medicine is referring to a wide range of herbal plants utilized by traditional healthcare practices and therapies that largely exist outside of conventional

medicine. This may or may not recognized as medicinally valuable through modern science, Tanner¹. Indigenous healing can be defined as beliefs and practices that originate within a culture and are designed specifically for the needs of cultural group members. According to Ndikum², indigenous knowledge is existed before the advent of modern conventional medicine that were used to promote, maintain, and restore health among people. Obomsawin³ added that indigenous knowledge represents the accumulated experience, wisdom, and know-how unique to a given culture, society, and/or community. It stands apart as a distinctive body of knowledge that has evolved over many generations in a particular ecosystem. The application of indigenous healing includes designated healers within a culture who provide various forms of assistance, healing, and/or guidance to individuals who seek intervention for particular problems, Harley⁴.

In the Philippines, indigenous healing maintains the balance of elements in people care. The country is known

to have diverse culture and heritage that provided the current traditional and alternative health care practices. When western medicine was not familiar among people yet, the immediate answer to any health problem were the herbs and plants that can be easily found in the yards. During these days, indigenous healers were in demand, because they were the only health providers available in the community. The *albularyo* or the *maestros* (traditional healers) were experts in herbal medicines and the expense of indigenous materials and resources. They are sometimes referred to as *hilot*. The evolution of Philippine indigenous medicine is an interesting study influenced by religion, mysticism, magic, superstition, folkloric herbalism and western medicine.

While not all Filipino traditional healers have an in-depth understanding of the details about indigenous healing, their ways, techniques, skills and knowledge revolve along the philosophy of focusing on the cure, whereas sickness can be prevented. Today, indigenous healing still continues, but the people who once were an essential part of societies have been replaced largely by the Western Medicine. Only few have retained the ancient practice of indigenous healing. Modern Filipinos do not usually run to the local *albularyo*, instead, they go to a clinic or a hospital believing that the efficacy of modern medicine in resolving health problems is more effective than indigenous healing system

The Ga'dang are the natural born of the towns of Bayombong, Solano, and Bagabag in the province of Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. These towns built near the western bank of the Magat river (a tributary of the Cagayan River) and of the towns of Santiago (Carig), Angadanan, Cauayan, and Reyna Mercedes. In 1939, the Ga'dang with approximately 2,000 where 1,400 lived in the borders of Kalinga and Bontok sub-provinces and some 600 were residing in the municipal districts of Antatet, Dalig, and the barrios of Gamu and Tumauni. Dalig is said to be the origin of the Christianized Ga'dang. Around 14,964 Christians who spoke the Ga'dang language with 6,790 were in Nueva Vizcaya, and 8,174 in Isabela. There were around 3,000 to 4,000 who were Ilocano, Ibanag, or Yogad and infiltrated with the Ga'dang through intermarriage. They originally practice two indigenous healing rituals called the *walli* and *pattalyat*. The *walli* is a form of ritual offering sacrificial performance in which part of the victim is segregated. They have adopted the term *akkewalli* to signify the sacrifice of the mass. All rites in which something is given in exchange for the soul of a sick to the spirits, ghosts or ghosts-deities without ritual segregation of part of the victim or offering are called *pattalyat*, sometimes called *pangakaw*, Lambrecht⁵.

These indigenous healing paved their own ways but only few have found the value of these practices. Among the many reasons in putting away the old indigenous healing practices in sideways were the presence of modern medical services elsewhere, despite of being more expensive and unaffordable. It has gradually forced underground in many societies due to negative impression by the community and different medical and religious sectors. The foregoing scenario inspires the researcher to conduct a study in order to address specific issues about the status of indigenous healing practices, government policies, and perceptions of young and elderly Ga'dang people in Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines.

2. Materials and Methods

This study used the qualitative research method. A 15-day community immersion, observation, Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and face-to-face interview with the informants were conducted. Using an unstructured interview guide, important data and information gathered from the sponsoring families and traditional healers who were identified through the assistance of the *Afu-afu(s)* (Ga'dang Leaders) and Barangay Chairmen of San Nicolas (Bayombong), Roxas (Solano), and Villa Coloma, Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines where majority of Ga'dang people live. A 5-day immersion per family were spent to observe their day-to-day way of life. Scheduled activities to observe the Ga'dang elders' indigenous healing practices were also arranged. Gathered data were enhanced through online interviews.

2.1 Study Protocol

Prior to the conduct of the study, series of meetings/ consultations with the Ga'dang community through the Nueva Vizcaya Ga'dang Indigenous Peoples Organization (NNGIPO) *Afu-afu(s)*, members and representatives from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Provincial Office were conducted. Courtesy calls to the barangay captains were done before the immersion activities. Certain rules, regulations and policies were set to preserve and protect the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and property ownership or traditional use through the issuance of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The presentation and validation of outputs was conducted to ensure the authenticity of information presented. The objectives of the study were explained to the participants and assured them of confidentiality of information divulged. Participants were informed about their voluntary participation and could be terminated any time without reason and penalty.

3. Results and Discussion

Herbal Medicine is undoubtedly used by the whole world today as a form of alternative medicine. It has proven its usefulness and efficacy as substitute for modern medicine. Even without scientific studies, it has been patronized over thousands of years by millions of people due to its accessibility. According to the World Health Organization⁶ (WHO), there have been renewed attention and interest in the use of traditional medicine globally in the past decade. In China, around 40% traditional medicine health care delivered to its population. Over 60% of the population sought health advice and treatment from traditional healers before visiting a medical doctor. Those that sought formal health care also continued to visit a traditional healer. In some developed countries, traditional medicines are becoming more popular. The percentage of the population that has used such medicines at least once was 48% in Australia, 31% in Belgium, 70% in Canada, 49% in France and 42% in the United States of America. In Costa Rica, people consult a folk practitioner for culturally specific and chronic diseases. While for preventive health care, government-sponsored clinics in rural communities does the treatment.

Oliver⁷ asserted that the practice of traditional medicine within Australia is at risk of being lost due to the impact of colonization. Displacement of people from traditional lands as well as changes in family structures affecting passing on cultural knowledge are two major examples of this impact. Traditional healing was the only source of primary health care. According to the Australian Indigenous Health Infonet, traditional healing finds new interpretations by applying ancient cultural knowledge to address trauma, restore and sustain holistic wellbeing. Reinstating pride in cultural identity, connection to country, and involvement in community are critical elements of indigenous healing programs. Many communities also still have access to indigenous healing practices such as bush medicines and spiritual healing. Nationally, organizations are learning from and incorporating indigenous healing methods into their healing work.

3.1 Indigenous Healing Practices of Ga'dang People

Indigenous peoples over many centuries have maintained a unique and judicious balance between human needs and nonhuman nature. Many indigenous peoples have growing interest in returning to their sacred teachings

and ceremonies and continue to follow their traditions to sustain and fully understand themselves, Solomon and Wane⁸. The Ga'dang indigenous healers practice three healing rituals called the *Tamoyong*, *Galdok* and *Mafurugira* or *Erkaddan*. The *Tamoyong* is an *anitu* (ancestor spirit) ritual for children. This ritual is being performed by a *mafuriat* (Ga'dang indigenous healer) to heal a sick person using a specified costume and dances. While in a trance, the *mafuriat* calls the spirit to possess her body. Once the spirit entered the body, she immediately gives instructions to the parents or relatives of the sick person to attain fast recovery.

The *Galdok* healing is being performed when an unknown spirit is suspected to have caused slight illness among children. These illnesses may be fever, stomachache or headache. It is believed that when the child was left alone in front of the house, a spirit may have playfully caused the illness. The *ulo-ulonadanum* (water spirit) shall be invited to heal the sick. This procedure shall be performed by the *mafuriat* by praying to the *anitu* and put on the table a piece of small, circular jewelry. She ties the *galdok* with a piece of thread and hang like a pendulum. A two small pieces of bamboo poured with clean water will serve as trough. She soaks the tiny pieces of sliced betel nuts in the water and dangles the *galdok* (wooden spoon) closely above the bamboo trough for three times. A *wari* (bid to the spirit) shall be offered to the *anitu*.

The *Mafurugira* or *Erkaddan* is a ritual to diagnose the causes of sickness using a *furug* (small, white marble-like seeds). The ceremony will be done in the house of the sick through the *mafuriat*. She performs the healing procedures by taking the *furug* being kept and hanged beside the *Nanolay* (the God for Ga'dang people). She will pray to the *anitu*, then bring-out the *kallabtibanga* (cover of an earthen pot), places it at the center of an upturned *ampalung* (woven or bamboo container) filled with rice grains. She dips the first *furug* in coconut oil and places it in the middle of the rice grains. The second *furug* shall be placed on top of the first *furug* while asking the causes of sickness. Upon listening to responses, the healing process shall be determined. After the healing ceremonies, the family waits for the sick to recover. The Ga'dang people classifies their illnesses as natural and supernatural. Natural illnesses are developed or acquired while supernatural illnesses are caused by one or more supernatural beings which is called *karangat* (bad spirits). The Table 1 shows the seven supernatural illnesses as characterized by description and treatment.

To obtain fast recovery of the sick, the *shaman* shall offer a short prayer and a betel nut and leaf which are very essential indigenous herbs among Ga'dang elderly. They

Table 1. Seven supernatural Ga'dang illnesses

Illness	Description	Treatment
1. <i>Matalamman</i>	The patient is suffering from sudden trembling and chilling.	The <i>shaman</i> (the ritual leader) chews "betel nut" and moves around the sick holding a fluttering chicken in his hand. Says a short prayer for fast recovery of the sick.
2. <i>Kulikug</i>	The patient is having a high fever.	The <i>shaman</i> takes a small bottle containing liquor, wraps up with red clothes and goes to the place where he thinks the molesting spirit dwells. Say a short prayer for fast recovery of the sick.
3. <i>Malabbalabbat</i>	The patient is chilling.	The <i>shaman</i> breathes on the head of the sick person, rubs the head with oil and starts a ritual to drive away the bad spirit. Says a short prayer for fast recovery of the sick.
4. <i>Mabbingkubingkunag</i>	The patient is affected by cramps and stiffness of the muscles.	The <i>shaman</i> chews a "betel nut" spits the saliva to the sick and rubs his body with spittle. Says a short prayer for fast recovery of the sick.
5. <i>Mappilapilay</i>	The patient has a fracture or endured bones or muscles.	The <i>shaman</i> asks somebody to tie a small pig to the endured part of the body and starts wishing the spirit to leave the sick person through a short prayer.
6. <i>Malohona ulu</i>	The patient suffers severe headache.	The <i>shaman</i> flutters a chicken around the sick by saying a ritual to drive away the bad spirit. Says a short prayer for fast recovery of the sick.
7. <i>Mabbangnag</i>	The patient is struck by deafness.	The <i>shaman</i> speaks to the "betel nut", perform a ritual and offer a chicken or a pig. Says a short prayer for fast recovery of the sick.

often use betel nut in almost all of their rituals. Aside from the chicken and pig as form of offerings, they also offer eggs depending on the type of illness. According to *Afu-afu* Palmer, the betel nut is used by the shaman during the ritual to determine the desire of the *Dumadaga* (a head of *karangat* that causes deafness). If the betel nut chew trembles, the *karangat* is believed to have satisfied with the offering. If the sick person does not recover, the *shaman* performs the offering of a pig or chicken. The ritual called *mangidahut si matakkit* (to bring down a sick person) where the sick person laid down in the river. This rite is being performed near the riverbed where a ritual hut is constructed. The *shaman* leads the ritual while the sick and the participants sit in places where they are comfortable. The shaman leads the prayer, officiates the healing procedure with a live pig as an offering. After the ritual, all the participants will eat together and wait for few days until the sick recovers. Today, few have sustained their indigenous healing practices due to dropping

number of clients who preferred to see a modern medical practitioner for healing. Majority of the Ga'dang people choose a modern medicine than an indigenous healing treatment. The impact of modernization, extreme urbanized community, education, economic stability and membership to different religious organizations are among the few influences to change the people's concept in healing, says *Afu-afu* Palmer in an interview.

3.2 Indigenous Healing Techniques and Procedures

Indigenous healing practice is an important resource which can be mobilized for the attainment of the common goal of health for all. This healing practice has contributed significantly to man's struggle against diseases and maintenance of health. Indigenous materials and resources are used in most countries in the world either within the state health care system or in communities and private practices outside the state system.

The non-western indigenous healing methods, techniques and procedures consist of basic principles that form the foundation of credibility and effectiveness of the healers who practice them, Lee⁹. There are three salient characteristics that define traditions of indigenous healing methods: religion and spiritualism, various levels of human experience, and a holistic approach to healing, Lee & Armstrong¹⁰. The indigenous healing requires the application of wisdom that manifest in ways of knowing, seeing, and thinking that are passed down orally to the next generation. It emphasizes the importance of spirituality to health and wellbeing, having a unique way in which nurtures relationship, respect and responsibility to the creator, the earth, and humankind through sacred rituals and healing practices, Day, Silva and Monroe¹¹.

The Table 2 shows the different sets of healing techniques and procedures used by the three Gádang elderly as Key Informants (KI). These informants have their own specific healing expertise engaged in treating illnesses that are focused to ordinary ailments and diseases. Intensive illnesses are often referred to modern or mainstreamed medical practitioners for appropriate medical treatment.

The use of coconut oil is very essential in healing rituals. According to *Afu-afu* Roger, coconut oil is an

essential form of healing among Gádang elderly. It is tested in terms of its efficacy, especially in the treatment of *tallin*, *usug*, *bannat*, *laffu* and other forms of external illnesses when accompanied with prayers. This healing material can be found in the yard and processed through juice extraction. The *hilot* who specializes in sprains, fractures treatments, headache, stomach ache, muscle pain and other external illnesses are treated using coconut oil. The *magpapaanak/komadrona*, besides prenatal visits and delivering babies, often performs the *suob* (a form of "aroma therapy" using coconut oil extracts) ritual. Some healers limit their practice of folkloric therapies to more specialized modalities. The *mangluluop* specializes in diagnostic techniques, usually referring the patients after diagnosis to the *albularyo* or *mediko* (traditional healers) for definitive treatments. The Figure 1 shows a coconut oil extract used for indigenous healing among Gádang elderly.

The *albularyo* is a general indigenous healing practitioner who is knowledgeable in most of the folkloric modalities, especially versed in the use of medicinal herbs. He is called a "witch doctor" commonly found in rural or far-flung areas in the Philippines. He provides an alternative help for the sick, first-aid remediation and immediate response to emergency cases where medical

Table 2. Indigenous healers, healing techniques and procedures

Illness	Description	Healing Techniques and Procedures
Key Informant 1 Komadrona (Milot – Ga'dang, Hilot – Tagalog, Massager – English)	Postpartum therapy	To treat <i>madallagan</i> or <i>bannat</i> for woman who gave birth to a child.
	Massage and body therapy	To treat <i>laffu</i> (sprains), gently rubbing coconut oil to the part of the body with sprain or pain. Especially done in the morning and before going to sleep in the evening.
		To treat muscle pain, body pain, head ache and stomach ache, rubbing of coconut oil to the part of the body with pain or aching is very essential.
Key Informant 2 Albularyo (Gumaakaw-Ritual performer)	Ritual for inflections	Offering prayers for the unseen spirit.
	Ritual for fertility	Offering prayers with <i>wali</i> (offering to spirit) for the wife to get pregnant.
	Ritual for <i>tallin</i> (a child who suffers stomach ache)	To treat <i>tallin</i> (caused by excessive movement), rubbing of coconut oil to the stomach to ease the child's pain. The results of this illness are body discomfort, nausea, abdominal pain and loss of appetite to eat.
	Ritual for <i>buyun</i> (thief identification)	Drop rice seeds to clear water with silent prayer.

Key Informant 3 Mediko <i>(Indigenous medical practitioner)</i>	Ventosa healing (treatment of body pain and other pain that brought about by stress and tension)	Using glasses, cotton and coconut oil. The cotton with coconut oil will be set on fire then immediately covered with glass.
	<i>Banggit</i> (circumcision)	During Lenten season, the mediko usually performs circumcision to young boys because they believe that in this season, there is less pain and healing would be easier.
	<i>Kulebra</i> (erupted rashes)	Treatment of kulebra is usually done between 5-6 in the afternoon. Accordingly, when treatment is conducted during these times, healing will be easier to occur.

or modern doctors are not available. The *mediko* is a practicing indigenous healer who believes that they acquired their healing powers from God. It is a calling from a supernatural being filled with sincere prayers and religious rituals, performed through meditation with the Holy Spirit. They don't accept money as payment but sometimes, they accept anything in place of their services, like chicken, coconut, rice or any form of gift as a show of gratitude to their services.

Manang (Sister) Emily, *hilot* (massage practitioner), revealed that she is often called for *hilot* treatment by some patients even in other towns of Nueva Vizcaya. She specializes with muscle, back and body pains, headache and stomachache. She uses coconut oil and sometimes a commercial oil treatment. Manang Emily also performs *ventosa* healing to eliminate body pain caused by stress and tension. Using old coins, clear glasses, cotton cloth and oil, she can already perform the healing. By covering the coins with cloth, putting oil to the cotton and setting on fire on sores body areas and immediately covering with glasses. She also performs therapeutic massage for those who were attacked by hypertension. She revealed

that those who availed her services have attained high satisfaction level.

In an interview with *Wayi* (Friend) Myrna, one of the women Ga'dang leaders, she has proven that Ga'dang people are seeking the advices of the indigenous healers negligibly, if not to totally consider them unimportantly. Most of the time, they go to the clinic or hospitals for check-up or consultation whenever they get sick, especially the children. They do not want to put their health at stake because they have known a lot of casualties or deaths for relying with indigenous healers. In a local dialect, she expressed with sincerity, "*Narigaten nga isugal ti biag kadagiti mangngagas ditoy ta baka isu pay ti gapu ti inkam ipapatay*" (It is not easy to gamble our life with the healers here, it is maybe the cause of our death). She also added that she is very particular with the health of her family, especially her grandchildren. Even for simple fever, she quickly rushed to the clinic for check-up. Often times, commercial medicines are being prescribed and in just one day or two, the fever will be over.

3.3 Utilization of Indigenous Healing Materials and Resources

Indigenous healing is often the first remedy of treatment-seeking, particularly among low income sectors in rural areas. Proper utilization of indigenous healing materials and resources can help remedy any stage of illness as replacement for the scarcity and expense of modern medical treatment. Due to high levels of poverty in some rural households, indigenous healing is considered vital to boost the physical health welfare of the people. But today, there is a need to link the old form of indigenous healing practice to younger generation where there is a larger educated populace. These traditional herbal medicines are no longer valued as being useful as before. With the availability of modern medicine and technology, the indigenous healing practices passed onto the hands of the present generation may suffer from loss. Hence, the demand for more researches to investigate the extent



Figure 1. Coconut oil used for indigenous healing among Ga'dang elderly.

to which herbal materials and resources are used is continuously demanded.

For Gádang households, indigenous healing has become an issue. They find indigenous healing less helpful and put more attention in modern medical treatment. However, there are still many Gádang people who believe that some illnesses are caused by supernatural phenomena, like the *tamay* (a sickness that brought about by a witch/witchcraft). They describe a victim to get sick because he or she is being hurt by a living person called *mammanamay* (the person who performs *tamay*). This person is believed to have an evil power that she can perpetrate pain and sickness to her victim. Some of the common ailments are headache, body pain, stomachache, skin diseases, body itch, or unusual ailments and unbearable pain are felt in which different objects, worms, insects are found in the body.

Because of the intensive belief of people on the impact of indigenous healers for *tamay*, people seek the services of the rural healers. Although, they avail for modern medical treatment, and if no cure to avail, they would go back to the indigenous healers. Tendency, some people just die without proper treatment in the clinic or hospital because they have been convinced that the cause of their illness was due to an evil spirit brought about by the *mammanamay*. But it cannot be denied that there are also those who were cured from indigenous treatment, so they continue trusting the capability of the indigenous healers.

Treatment of *tamay* is the expertise of Lola (Grandmother) Nemia. Many victims of *tamay* come to Lola Nemia for treatment. Even those with high spiritual belief are coming for healing because they believe that even the bible speaks about *tamay*. Another one is *usug*. For Gádang people, *usug* is an instant illness that is being unintentionally inflicted by a person who have acquired when any of her family member whom he/she loves so much died. Other stories revealed how a person has acquired the capability to unknowingly perform *usug* is due to transfer from a relative who died to another member of the family

Symptoms of *usug* are severe headache, vomiting and weakening body. It will take around 10-15 minutes if it will not be treated immediately. *Usug* can be easily eliminated, according to Lola Nemia. Just ask the person who inflicted it, touch the head of the victim and blow him/her gently, then slowly, the pain shall banish. The leaves of *malunggay* (horseradish), *guyabano* (soursop) and *bayabas* (guava) are effective herbal medicine for *usug*. Accompanied with short prayer, massage the leaves in the head of the victim and the pain shall be eliminated.

Other herbal medicines used for healing are *gumamela*, *kataka-taka*, *subusub*, *dangla*, *oregano*, *sambong* and many others. These herbal medicines are growing in the yards and can be easily gathered for healing anytime. Lola Nemia also uses other plants to treat different illnesses which to her are very effective. These medicinal plants are also used by the other Gádang healers as means of indigenous treatment even before a modern or western medicinal practice exist. She mentioned 12 herbal medicines found in the yard, just at the back of her house. The table below reveals the herbal medicines used for indigenous healing, selection of dosage and application process.

Lola Berta is known for her expertise in *atang/walli* (offering food for unseen spirits). She believes that this healing ritual will protect the body from illnesses caused by unknown spirits. Once these spirits are being harmed, they cause the human body pain or illnesses. Some of these are headache, skin itch, boils, swelling of any parts of the body and others. The spiritual medium who have the ability to interact with the unseen spirits can heal supernatural illnesses. The *atang/wali* is a form of sacrificial offering using butchered white chicken, eggs, wine, betel nut/leaves, *kakanin* (ricecake), etc. in exchange of healing. The process of doing the ritual is by setting a table with a lighted candle, cooked food set on top of the table accompanied with a short prayer. After doing the ritual, the food offering shall stay on top of the table for few days, until the sick shall recover.

According to Lola Berta, not all the time, this healing ritual is effective. The healing may depend upon how desirous is the sick to be healed. Sometimes, she even advises the sick to also take some medicines during the curing period or to consult a doctor if the illness is getting worse. The *atang/wali*, is just a ceremony that may help the sick to get better from his/her illness. If the patient doubted the power of the ritual, effectiveness of the ritual cannot be achieved. Using a local dialect, Lola Berta cited, "*Ammum kadi nga sumagmamanu laengen ti um-umay tapnu agpaatang kanyak?*" (You know, only few have already come to seek for *atang/wali* from me?). Many of them no longer believe in the healing power of this ritual because of their religious affiliation. Some even say that this ritual is a form of evil practice, but for some Gádang elderly who belong to the Roman Catholic, they still believe with the efficacy of this practice, Lola Berta added.

Based on the interviews to the respondents, it can be said that the ancient indigenous healing techniques and procedures among Gádang elderly is continually fading. Some of the reasons were due to deteriorating support from the younger generation and the feeling of doubtfulness on the worth and efficacy of indigenous

Table 3. Herbal medicines used for indigenous healing

Names of Plants	Essential Parts	Botanical Names	Medication	Diseases, Illnesses and Application
1. <i>Bayabas</i> (Guava)	Leaves	<i>Psidium Guajava</i>	Decoction	Wound. The boiled leaves will be used to clean the would once a day.
2. <i>Anonang</i>	Leaves and Roots	<i>Cordia Dichotoma</i>	Decoction	Maddalagan (Gave birth to a child). The boiled leaves and roots will be used for bathing every day.
3. <i>Subusub</i> (Camphor)	Leaves and Roots	<i>Cinnamom umamphora</i>	Decoction	Maddalagan (Gave birth to a child). The boiled leaves and roots will be used for bathing every day.
4. <i>Dangla</i> (Lagundi)	Leaves	<i>Vitex Negundo</i>	Decoction	Pasma. The boiled leaves will be used for bathing as they are needed.
5. <i>Tumok</i> (Banana)	Fruit	<i>Musa Acuminata</i>	Decoction	Dysentery. The ripe fruit can be eaten raw to ease stomach ache.
6. <i>Lidda</i>	Roots	<i>Cymbopogon Citratus</i>	Decoction	Renal failure. The boiled roots can be taken 1 glass, 3 times a day.
7. Coconut oil	Fruit	<i>Cocos Nucifera Linn</i>	Extraction	Sprain, tooth ache. Massage coconut oil to sprain and drop in the aching part of the tooth, when needed.
8. <i>Malunggay</i> (Horse radish)	Leaves	<i>Moringa Oliefera</i>	Extraction	Cut/wounds. The extracted juice will be applied to quickly dry the wound.
9. <i>Lasona</i> (Onion)	Leaves	<i>Allium cepa</i>	Extraction	Cough with phlegm. The smoke coming from the dried leaves is effective cure for cough. Do it in the afternoon, before going to bed.
10. <i>Gawed, Ikmo, Momma</i> (Betel nut/leaf)	Leaves	<i>Mimosa pudica</i>	Poultice	Cough. The juice of extracted leaves is effective cure for cough.
11. <i>Gumamela</i>	Flower	<i>Hibiscus</i>	Poultice	Boils. The extracted juice from the flower can be applied overnight.
12. <i>Kataka-taka</i> (Life plant)	Leaves	<i>Piper betle</i>	Poultice	Boils. The extracted juice including the leaves can be applied overnight.

healing. Aside from the influence of religious affiliation, the accessibility of health providers like barangay health clinic, public and private hospitals all over the province. Indigenous healing techniques vary and are specific to regional influence. Educational attainment, personal maturation, and connection to one's cultural identity influence the scope and utilization of indigenous healing practices. Gelfand¹² stated that African Americans tend to use spirituality, prayer, hope, faith healing, music and healing rhythms, rituals, potions, roots, plants, and herbs to treat certain illnesses and conditions. Other indigenous healing and helping practices that are pervasive among African Americans, especially for emotional or mental

health issues, kinship systems and spiritualism-religion.

3.4 Philippine Government Policies to Strengthen Indigenous Healing

To address the issue about the indigenization of herbal medicines in the Philippines, the Congress created Republic Act No. 8423¹³. It is an act making the Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC) to accelerate the development of traditional and alternative health care in the Philippines, providing for a traditional and alternative health care development fund and for other purposes. Article 1, section 2 is hereby

declaring the policy of the State to improve the quality and delivery of health care services to the Filipino people through the development of traditional and alternative health care and its integration into the national health care delivery system. It shall also be the policy of the state to seek a legally workable basis by which indigenous societies would own their knowledge of traditional medicine.

The Philippines is home of 1,500 medicinal plants from 13,500 plant species, 3,500 are considered

indigenous, yet only 120 medicinal plants or 12.5% have been scientifically validated for safety and efficacy. Ten of these were duly approved by the Department of Health¹⁴ (DOH) for use. However, indigenous healers were advised to take extra precautionary measures before using these medicines. Although these are all-natural drugs, still they are dangerous if not taken as recommended by a medical practitioner. The ten Philippines' herbal medicines plans approved by the DOH are shown in the following table.

Table 4. Ten Philippines' herbal medicine plants approved by the DOH

Common Name	Parts Used	Preparation/Indication	Diseases/Illnesses
1. <i>Dangla</i> (Ilokano) - five-leaved chaste tree, horseshoe vitex	Leaves and flowering tops	Decoction - boil raw fruits or leaves in 2 glasses of water for 15 minutes. Take three times a day	Asthma, cough, fever, dysentery, colds, skin diseases, headache, sprain, rheumatism, contusions, and insect bites
2. <i>Ulasimang-bato</i> , <i>pansit-pansitan</i> (Tagalog); <i>olasiman-ihalas</i> (Cebu, Bisaya); <i>tangon-tangon</i> (Bikol); <i>peperonia</i> (English)	Aerial plant parts	Infusion, decoction or salad preparation. Boil the leaves and drink three times a day	Lowers uric acid, gout and rheumatic pains
3. Guava (<i>Psidium guajava</i> L.) <i>bayabas</i> (Tagalog); <i>bayyabas</i> (Ilokano); guava (English)	Leaves and fruits	As gargle for toothache. Boil chopped leaves for 15 minutes and take 3-4 times a day	Wounds, diarrhea and antiseptic
4. <i>Bawang</i> (<i>Alium sativum</i> L.), <i>ajos</i> (Bisaya); garlic (English)	Leaves and bulbs (cloves)	Dosage must not exceed 6-8 cooked cloves a day. Stomach ulcer may develop if garlic is eaten raw	Hypertension and toothache
5. <i>Yerba Buena</i> (<i>Clinopodium douglasii</i>). Common name: Peppermint	Leaves, sap of plant	Boil chopped leaves and drink one part every 3 hours. For external use, crush the fresh leaves and squeeze sap. Massage sap on painful parts with eucalyptus	Headache, stomachache, rheumatism, arthritis cough & cold, swollen gums, toothache, gas pain, nausea & fainting, insect bites and pruritis
6. <i>Sambong</i> (Tagalog); <i>lakad-bulan</i> (Bikol); Ngai camphor (English)	Leaves and flowering tops	Boil leaves in 2 glasses of water for 15 minutes. Take when needed	Hypertension; dissolves kidney stones
7. <i>Akapulko</i> (<i>Cassia alata</i> L.), <i>katanda</i> (Tagalog); <i>andadasi</i> (Ilokano); <i>palochina</i> (Bisaya)	Leaves	Fresh, matured leaves are pounded. Apply soap to the affected area 1-2 times a day	Anti-fungal (tinea flava, ringworm, athlete's foot and scabies)
8. <i>Niyog-Niyogan</i> (<i>Quisqualis Indica</i> L.) Common names: <i>tartaraok</i> (Tagalog); <i>balitadham</i> (Bisaya); ragoon creeper, chinese honeysuckle, liane vermifuge	Fruits	The seeds are taken 2 hours after supper. If no worms are expelled, the dose may be repeated after one week.	Anti-helminthic
9. <i>Tsaang-gubat</i> (<i>Carmona retusa</i> (Vahl) Masam.), <i>putputai</i> (Bikol); <i>alangit</i> (Bisaya); forest tea, wild tea (English)	Leaves	Boil chopped leaves into 2 glasses of water for 15 minutes. Drink 1 part every 3 hours	Diarrhea and stomachache
10 <i>Ampalaya</i> (<i>Momordica charantia</i> (L.) DC), <i>parya</i> (Ilokano); <i>palia</i> (Bisaya); bitter gourd, bitter cucumber, bitter melon (English)	Young leaves	Boil leaves for 15 minutes. Take 1/3 cup 3 times a day after meals	Diabetes Mellitus (Mild non-insulin dependent)

The ten medicinal plants approved for use by the DOH are popular among Filipinos and can be gathered in the yards. Due to expensive western medicines which most Filipinos could not afford, they learned to use herbal medicines in providing basic medical care. Tolentino *et. al*¹⁵ reported that most of the Batangueños (native of the province of Batangas, Philippines) are aware of the ten DOH approved herbal plants, the proper handling and preparations. Most of the herbal medicines that they are familiar with are *bayabas*, *ampalaya*, and *sambong*. They are unfamiliar with *ulasimang-bato/pansit-pansitan*, *akapulko* and *niyog-niyogan*. The *ampalaya*, *bayabas*, and *lagundi* were the most utilized herbal plants, while the *ulasimang-bato/pansit-pansitan*, *niyog-niyogan* and *yerba buena* were the least used. In response to the less serious patronage of the people to indigenous healing as an alternative modality of medicine, the DOH launched the Traditional Medicine Program in 1992. This program aims to promote an effective and safe use of traditional medicine. The implementation of Republic Act 8423, otherwise known as the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Act (TAMA) of 1997 gave rise to the creation of PITAHC which is mandated to generally promote and formulate policies for the protection of indigenous and natural health resources and technology.

Generally, the DOH have committed to working towards fairness and settlement in healthcare, which includes a focus on cultural safety and the integration of traditional medicine and healing practices. Its objective is to commit and establish a culturally respectful health and social services system. Hence, PITAHC to accelerate the development of traditional and alternative health care in the Philippines and to provide a traditional and alternative health care development fund and for other purposes. Under Republic Act 7875, the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation or Philhealth is mandated to provide all Filipinos universal health coverage by 2010. Indigenous Filipinos are included under the indigency program. However, there have been problems in the enrollment of IPs due to lack of birth certificates and problems in determining their place of residence. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) is addressing this problem through an assisted process of documentation. According to Batangan¹⁶, the small number of enrollees is attributed to the fact that Indigenous Peoples (IP) groups are dependent on local government resources and the generosity of politicians. Under the decentralized health system, local governments are mandated to deliver health services to their constituents. However, these are usually biomedical in nature, inconsistent with the traditional knowledge and

practices of indigenous peoples.

According to the report of UNESCO in 1994, several existing problems the government has to address to establish a strong foundation for the use of traditional medicine. The lack of legal framework and official recognition of traditional medicine by conventional medicine is just one among so many issues. This causes a very slow collaboration between modern medicine and traditional healing practitioners, White and Edwards¹⁷. In Cameroon, one of the strategies they used is by collaborating with the World Health Organization (WHO) in putting strategic platforms towards the development of traditional medicine. They harmonized the traditional medicine and modern medicine and institutionalized to reinforce the practice of traditional medicine. This action underpins poverty alleviation in the country, Fokunang *et al.*¹⁸.

3.5 Value of Indigenous Healing within Culture

Culture is referring to beliefs, customs, arts, traditions or practices of a particular society, civilization, group, place or time. It is a way of life, thinking, behaving and working that exists in an organization. The basic principle of culture is wholeness and interrelatedness. Everything is considered to have life and every member of the organization has its own function to perform and considered important component of the system. Everyone is interconnected, intertwined and everything affects other things and people.

In a focused group discussion (FGD) conducted by the researcher with five elderly Ga'dang people, they revealed that although they believed in indigenous healing, spiritual healing through fervent prayers still more effective than any other forms of healing. *Elderly 3* (said in Ilokano language), "*Agpayso nga mamatiak kadagiti albularyo, mediko ken nalalaing nga doctor nga makapaimbag ti naduma-duma nga saksakit, ngem nangnangruna nga dakdakkal pay laeng ti pammatik ti puwersa ti kararag nga makapaimbag ti saksakit dagiti tattao*" (Truly, I believe with albularyo and mediko (indigenous healers), including the capabilities of excellent medical doctors to cure different illnesses, but I still have a bigger trust to God's power to heal the pain of the people). *Elderly 5*, agreed that "spiritual healing" is very essential component of healing. He said that even the healing rituals are accompanied with prayers, he firmly believes that spirituality is a central part of healing, no matter how excellent the technique or approach used in healing.

When asked about the value of indigenous healing within culture, *Elderly 2* answered, indigenous healing

is less valued because majority of the young generation are already well-educated, intertwined with various forms of religious teachings which sometimes questioning the efficacy, credibility and integrity of the healers to perform healing. Indigenous healing culture is sacrificed. *Elderly 1* explained in local language that, “*Ti ugali gamin ket nasisita nga rikna tapnu napardas nga lumaing ti agsakit*” (The culture and belief are very important component for fast recovery of the sick).

Culture is the primary vehicle to attain healing. It is all encompassing principle that “culture is medicine,” it means that connecting with one’s culture has both protective and therapeutic value, promoting both resilience to and recovery from traumatic events, Bassett, Tsosie and Nannauck¹⁹. The above ideas were similarly undertaken by Pesek, Helton, and Nair²⁰. They said that “health and wellness of an individual are reliant on the integrated effects of mind, body, and spirit.” They added that many of the traditional cultures in the world focused more on balance in the context of environmental respect. Varied cultures share remarkable similarities in their healing modalities and practices, especially considering the relative isolation from one to another, evidence that there is much truth to the healing knowledge they possess. The problems with deteriorating respect of the present generation to indigenous healing is due to indigenous methodologies that are not always projecting integrity inherent in them. Scientific paradigms are often used to deny or refute time-tested, reliable, valuable, and successful practices. There are still many things to do

before the trust of the people to indigenous healing can be recovered, like educating the people with the usefulness, accessibility and hospitalization costs of mainstreamed or modern medical services. The attitude and practices have great impact to the philosophy, culture and tradition in gaining fastest recovery and health improvement. It stresses the importance of spirituality to health and wellbeing but each has unique ways in which it nurtures relationship, respect and responsibility with the creator, the earth, and humankind through sacred rituals and healing practices.

3.6 Perception of Young and Elderly Gádang People on Indigenous Healing

Although there are no laws specifically governing indigenous healing practice among aboriginal people, still they do indigenous healing as an expression of their culture and tradition. These are important methods and techniques that they use as a result of their heritage and relocation to heal, cure, and respond to physical/medical conditions and psychological circumstances. The age selection of respondents for this study was based from the mandates of Republic Act No. 10742²¹, otherwise known as the “Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015,” of the Philippine government saying that, young people are at least fifteen (15) but not more than thirty (30) years of age. The following table discloses how the young generation of Gádang people perceive indigenous healing.

Table 5. Young people’s perception to indigenous healing

Young people’s perception to indigenous healing	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1. I patronize indigenous healing.	15	23.44	49	76.56	100
2. I believe that indigenous healing is effective.	12	18.75	52	81.25	100
3. I consult indigenous healer for simple or minor illness.	16	25.00	48	75.00	100
4. I consult indigenous healer for severe or serious illness.	08	12.50	56	87.50	100
5. My illness has improved after consulting an indigenous healer.	10	15.62	54	84.38	100
6. I prefer to consult an indigenous healer than a modern medicine practitioner.	08	12.50	56	87.50	100
7. I recommend an indigenous healer whenever my colleague(s) or any member(s) of the family get sick.	29	45.31	35	54.69	100
8. I believe that indigenous healing practice boosts the culture and tradition of the people.	40	62.50	24	37.50	100

The interview with 64 respondents (29 young men and 35 young women), with age ranging from 15-30 and are all residing in the province of Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, revealed that 15 (23.44%) of them answered “yes” and 49 (76.56%) answered “no” when asked if they patronize

indigenous healing. 12 (18.75%) of the respondents said “yes” while 52 (81.25%) said “no” when asked if they believe that indigenous healing is effective. In terms of consultation with an indigenous healer for simple or minor illness, majority of them 48 (75.00%) disagreed, while

16 (25.00%) agreed. Much more with severe or serious illness, where 56 (87.50%) of the respondents would not want to see an indigenous healer for consultation with only 8 (12.50%) preferred to.

54 (84.38%) were convinced that consultation with indigenous healing practitioners would not provide healing improvement at all, while the remaining 10 (15.62%) hoped for health improvements. The preference to consult a modern medicine practitioner whenever they get sick was extremely high with 56 (87.50%) of them, 8 (12.50%) would still sought indigenous healing. When asked if they recommend indigenous healing to immediate members of the family, 35 (54.69%) answered "no", and 29 (45.31%) answered "yes." But in terms of believing that indigenous healing practice boosts the culture and tradition of the people, there are at least 40 (62.50%) of the respondents answered "yes" with a little bit greater than to those who have answered "no" with 24 (37.50%).

It can be read from the results of the interview that younger generation were no longer influenced by the ancient healing practices. They prefer to see a modern doctor whenever they get sick, no matter how simple or serious the illness than an indigenous healer. However, they still believe that the constantly practice of indigenous healing would boost the weakening culture and tradition. According to one of the respondents, "there is no assurance that the old form of healing can still save their lives once they get sick, especially with severe illnesses." *Napakaraming magagaling na doktor na nagpakadalubhasa pa sa ibang bansa, bakit pa kami sa albularyo pupunta?* (There are expert doctors who specialized their fields in other countries, why we still need to see an ancient healer?), added by another interviewee. It means that their trust in indigenous healing has declined and deteriorated. The results of the interview may be inferred from the fact that the environment and the advantage of advance technologies greatly influence the young generation as to how they perceive the value of indigenous healing nowadays.

According to Relon²², the invasion of advance technology is one among the main reasons why younger generation tend to abandon their ancient culture and tradition. She found out that folk healers are instrumental in enriching the cultural beliefs and practices of typical Ilocano (vernacular language in the Northern Luzon, Philippines) community. They contribute in the diffusion of information using localized terms in Ilocano which are commonly encountered during the healing process. However, these terms are rarely used by the younger generation. As a result, they demonstrate little support

to the healing practice because they less understand the language used in healing. Sometimes, open communication plays important role in developing good relationship between a person having a thought and the other person receiving the message to avoid miscommunication. Stems from a misaligned explicit and implicit meaning between the sender and receiver instigating people to become uncooperative, simply because they don't understand the message they receive.

To validate the interviews with the group of young people, series of interviews with the Ga'dang elderly were also conducted. The interviews focused on how they perceive indigenous healing and how they looked at it as means of saving the old tradition and culture from possible loss. There were 62 Ga'dang elderly (21 men and 41 women) as participants. They were all residing in the province of Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines with ages ranging from 60-85. The age selection of elderly respondents for this study was based from the mandates of Republic Act No. 9257²³, otherwise known as the "Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003" of the Philippine government saying that "Senior citizen or elderly refers to any resident citizen of the Philippines at least sixty (60) years old and above." The table below reveals the perception of the Ga'dang elderly towards indigenous healing.

Out of 62 respondents, there were 44 (70.97%) of them answered "yes" and 18 (29.03%) answered "no" when asked if they patronize indigenous healing. In terms of effectiveness of indigenous healing, 38 (61.29%) believed that indigenous healing is effective and 24 (43.90%), it is ineffective. 47 (75.81%) of the respondents find consulting an indigenous healer if the illness is simple or minor with only 15 (24.19%) regret to have consultation with an indigenous healer even the illness is simple or minor. While 50 (80.65%) said "no" and 12 (19.35%) said "yes" to consultation to an indigenous healer if the illness is serious or in severe status.

After consultation with an indigenous healer, their illness improved according to 32 (51.61%) respondents, and the rest 30 (48.39%) respondents believed that their illness did not improved at all. Because majority of the respondents find no improvement of their health condition, if consultation is done by an indigenous healer, 40 (64.52%) of them rather preferred to have consultation with the modern medical practitioner than with an indigenous healer and 22 (35.48%) of them did. Their previous experiences with an indigenous healer have great impact to their decision whether they recommend indigenous healing to their colleagues or to any member of their families. 34 (54.84%) of them answered "yes" while 28 (45.16%) said "no", meaning they would still

recommend indigenous healing to their colleagues or any member of their families. In terms of boosting the old culture and tradition, all 62 (100%) respondents believed that indigenous healing can play a very important role in saving the old tradition and culture. The prevailing discussion shows that Ga'dang elderly have a wider perspective in terms of patronizing indigenous healing than the younger generation. Ga'dang elderly have the tendency to analyze and weigh situations before deciding whether to accept or reject any action. They find indigenous healing effective depending on the type of illness. Hence, are comfortable consulting an indigenous healing for simple or minor but not for severe or serious illnesses. They still recommend indigenous healing to their colleagues and family members to boost the old culture and tradition from possible lost.

In an interview with Lolo (Grandfather) Jose, he said that often, traditional healers possess doubtful powers, create their own influences as they desire to earn income from

healing. It is for this reason that the deteriorating support of the people to the indigenous healing not only among younger generation but also some older generation was due to lack of credibility and integrity to perform healing. The tendency of going to the nearest clinic or hospitals for medical treatment is higher because they do not want to put themselves to danger or to a situation with no assurance of healing. Eaves²⁴ believed that elderly people greatly influence younger generation in relation to their beliefs toward indigenous healing practices. They passed on from mother to daughter, father to son, grandparents to any younger member of the family who has the desire to continue the tradition. From a young age, they already taught them in order to keep the practice alive. Each family member is aware of the tradition concerning what herbs or roots he used for particular illness, and once he does not know what to apply, he consults and seeks advice from an older member of the family who has a wider knowledge about indigenous healing.

Table 6. Ga'dang elderly's perception to indigenous healing

Ga'dang elderly's perception to indigenous healing	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1. I patronize indigenous healing.	44	70.97	18	29.03	100
2. I believe that indigenous healing is effective.	38	61.29	24	43.90	100
3. I consult indigenous healer for simple or minor illness.	47	75.81	15	24.19	100
4. I consult indigenous healer for severe or serious illness.	12	19.35	50	80.65	100
5. My illness has improved after consulting an indigenous healer.	32	51.61	30	48.39	100
6. I prefer to consult an indigenous healer than a modern medicine practitioner.	40	64.52	22	35.48	100
7. I recommend an indigenous healer whenever my colleague(s) or any member(s) of the family get sick.	34	54.84	28	45.16	100
8. I believe that indigenous healing practice boosts the culture and tradition of the people.	62	100.0	00	00.00	100

4. Conclusion

Indigenous healing is a form of primary healthcare in rural and far-flung areas. The main purpose is to provide first-aid remediation to appease the spirits of ailing people before bringing to the clinic or hospital. The utilization of herbal medicines, indigenous materials and resources are very important to attain efficacy in addressing health problems. Indigenous healers continue to demonstrate huge and adept knowledge and skills in healing as seen from their positive and sustained importance of traditional healing practices. The potential contribution of indigenous healing in delivering immediate health services to the people is extremely valued by the Philippine government, thereby demonstrating support by means of formulating and implementing standards, guidelines and policies to

strengthen the role of traditional and alternative health care delivery system.

These traditional and alternative health care modalities have gained positive supports from majority of the Ga'dang elderly for reasons of affordability and accessibility. While efficacy remain uncertain, they still feel comfortable in patronizing indigenous healing for simple illness like body massage, headache and body ache. They recommend indigenous healing to their colleagues and family members to boost the old culture and tradition from possible lost. However, younger generation showed significantly low supports towards indigenous healing. They perceived that indigenous healing is ineffective and lack of credibility and integrity to perform healing. The attitudes have great impact to their age, education, religion and personal belief, thinking to gain faster recovery and health improvement

from modern medicine than to indigenous healing. This has placed the ancient healing culture to deterioration and extinction.

Indigenous healing has been used especially in less privileged communities where modern medicine is rarely afforded. It plays an important role in moral upright preservation for people's health but awareness and acceptability are increasingly deteriorating among younger generation. The influence of the environment and technology highly destructs the attention of the youth who are supposed to continue in conserving the ancient tradition and culture of the people. Revitalization of the old-age medicinal system needs some attention to establish linkages and interconnection of the two systems, indigenous healing and modern or mainstreamed medicine. Through an innovative approach to draw the connection of the two, proper education and dissemination, both forms of healing shall be appreciated and can be saved from possible extinction. Related ethnographic and qualitative researches offering wider understanding to the cultural value of indigenous healing, has impact to the lives of the people and contribute to the development of low-cost herbal plants and other medicinal and biological materials and resources available along ways should be instigated. In this way, making the most of the gift of nature can be maximized.

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