



Educational Research Center Inc.
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iJOINED ETCOR
P - ISSN 2984-7567
E - ISSN 2945-3577



The Exigency
P - ISSN 2984-7842
E - ISSN 1908-3181

Faith-Healing Tradition in Samar

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Received: 27 May 2025

Revised: 27 June 2025

Accepted: 29 June 2025

Available Online: 30 June 2025

Volume IV (2025), Issue 2, P-ISSN – 2984-7567; E-ISSN - 2945-3577

<https://doi.org/10.63498/etcor394>

Abstract

Aim: This study explored the perspectives of traditional healing practices as part of cultural education in Samar.

Methodology: A qualitative research design, specifically a short-term ethnographic approach, was employed to understand faith healers' perspectives on traditional healing practices, viewed as an integral part of educational practices in Samar.

Results: The findings revealed two primary themes: the perception of faith healing as a divine "mission" and a "community responsibility," emphasizing selfless service, tradition, and familial duty. Healers utilize diverse "forms of healing," including prayers (such as whispering and blowing), natural elements (like herbs and water), and traditional touch/massage. The "functions" of faith healing underscore selfless service and faith as a foundational principle. Its "value" is evident in providing emotional and spiritual support, immediate health solutions, and personal fulfillment for healers, particularly in areas with limited access to modern medicine, which is not understood and discussed well in the subject Discipline and Ideas in Social Sciences.

Conclusion Faith healing in Samar is a profound, interwoven practice of spiritual, cultural, and social elements. Viewing their abilities as sacred trusts, healers offer holistic care that transcends physical ailments, providing solace and hope. The study concludes by advocating for integrating these indigenous healing traditions into cultural education and encouraging partnerships between faith healers and formal healthcare initiatives to enhance cultural education in Samar.

Keywords: Faith Healing, Short Ethnography, Cultural Practices, Cultural Education, Samar

INTRODUCTION

Faith healing, a profound global tradition dating back to at least 14,000 B.C., fundamentally differs from conventional medicine by relying on spiritual belief and divine intervention, often incorporating prayer, rituals, and natural elements (Shah et al., 2020; Relon, 2018). This practice reflects ancient aspirations for longevity and the deep cultural ties between tradition and health beliefs worldwide (Nual Velez, 2021).

In the Philippines, faith healing remains a vital cultural and healthcare practice, especially in rural areas with limited access to modern medical infrastructure. Traditional Filipino medicine uniquely blends faith and healing with traditional healers—known by various regional names like mananambals (Cebuano), albularyo or parabulong (Bicol), and tambalan (Waraynon-speaking areas like Samar)—serving as essential community health providers. Their lineage often traces back to pre-colonial shamans, highlighting a profound historical continuity (Alimen, 2016; Berdon, 2016). Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Filipinos, particularly in underserved communities, instinctively turned to traditional and spiritual healing, underscoring the enduring trust in these practices (Kowalczyk et al., 2020; Papadakis, 2021). Studies indicate that approximately 50% of the Filipino population, especially low-income rural households, still rely on faith healing, emphasizing its critical role in national health (Berdon, 2016). In Samar, with



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its rich cultural and spiritual heritage, parabulong or tambalan healers remain integral figures, assisting isolated highland communities through prayer and spiritual intervention.

While faith healing varies across cultures, it often shares core tenets, sometimes leading to delays in seeking conventional medical treatment in many Asian nations (Shah et al., 2020). Despite societal stigma, global demand for these services continues to rise (Peprah et al., 2018). Patients often place immense trust in these healers, particularly for conditions believed to have supernatural origins (Sherra et al., 2017). Filipino faith healers employ diverse methods, including whispered prayers or blowing, herbal remedies, oils, traditional massage, sacred water, and divination like *Sahuma* (Vos, 2019; Moore & McClean, 2022; Relon, 2016; Berdon et al., 2016). Filipino health beliefs are profoundly influenced by cultural and religious convictions, attributing illnesses to factors such as *namamana* (inherited conditions) or *kaloob ng Diyos* (God's will), often leading individuals to faith healers when conventional medical options are exhausted or inaccessible (Berdon, 2016). Psychological research suggests the placebo effect contributes to faith-based healing (Varela, 2023), and studies indicate it can complement traditional medicine by emphasizing the divine's role in bolstering natural healing (Gopichandran, 2015). Within Philippine psychology, faith healing is recognized as a significant medico-religious practice, supplementing mainstream healthcare by addressing ailments that modern medicine struggles to explain or treat (Salazar, 2016).

Despite this rich heritage and continued importance, a critical gap exists in localized research. While broad national overviews of faith healing exist, specific investigations into its continuation and adaptation within particular local contexts, such as Samar, are limited (Rondilla et al., 2021). This short ethnographic research addressed this gap by investigating the continuity and evolution of faith-healing practices in Samar. It focused on the healers' perspectives, forms, functions, and cultural values, thereby contributing to documenting and preserving this vital Filipino cultural heritage and its role in local healthcare. This deep dive into local practices offered rich, real-world context for Discipline and Ideas in Social Sciences (DISS) lessons in Senior High School. It provided students with concrete examples of cultural phenomena, traditional knowledge systems, and their intersection with social issues, allowing for a more holistic and culturally relevant understanding of various social science disciplines and fostering critical thinking about local realities and global trends.

Objectives

This research uniquely focused on the faith healers' perspectives, delving into their practices' specific forms, functions, and values. This short-term ethnography aimed to understand faith healing comprehensively by addressing the following objectives:

1. explore how faith healers viewed their practice of healing;
2. explore how faith healing was practiced in Samar in terms of its form, function, and value; and
3. examine how faith healing traditions in Samar could be integrated into cultural education to enhance the subject Discipline and Ideas in Social Sciences (DISS).

METHODS

Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative research design to understand faith healing in Samar deeply. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researchers to explore the healers' complex experiences, beliefs, and cultural practices from their point of view, focusing on the "how" and "why" behind their work (Creswell & Poth, 2025; Patton, 2015). Specifically, the researchers employed a short-term ethnographic technique.

This meant the researchers immersed themselves in the community for a focused period to observe faith-healing rituals and daily life directly. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of the healers' environment, divine calling, community roles, and how their traditions continued in modern Samar despite practical research limits.

Population and Sampling

The researchers established strict inclusion criteria for participants to gather rich, relevant insights into Samar's faith healing. The researchers required healers to have (1) practiced for at least five years and (2) resided in Samar for the same duration, ensuring deep experience and local cultural immersion. Additionally, (3) participants had to demonstrate the use of both tangible materials (like herbs and oils) and intangible faith-based methods (like prayers).

These criteria ensured that the selected healers were experienced and deeply rooted in Samar's traditions, enhancing the study's data credibility.



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Instruments

A semi-structured interview guide was employed as this research study's primary data collection instrument. This approach was chosen for its inherent flexibility, allowing participants to elaborate extensively on their experiences and perspectives. The adaptable nature of semi-structured interviews facilitated a broader range of responses and enabled the elicitation of rich, detailed information. This aligns with the findings of O'Keeffe et al. (2016), who concluded that semi-structured interviews offer efficient and rapid facilitation of qualitative data.

Data Collection

The researchers secured consent from all participants included in the data gathering. The initial participant was identified through referrals from individuals who had experienced healing, and subsequent participants were found using a chain referral (snowball) method. The researchers visited these referred faith healers to determine their preferred interview schedules and observe their healing rites' performance. Upon returning, the researchers explained that the interviews would be recorded for accurate transcription and to capture their narratives precisely. Following this, the researchers proceeded with data collection.

Data Analysis

Researchers used narrative analysis for this study to understand how people shared their experiences through stories. They started with open-ended interviews to get detailed responses. After transcribing, they repeatedly reviewed the data to find key ideas and stay objective. Researchers looked for patterns, themes, and important phrases, organizing them into broader and more specific sub-themes, often using color coding for clarity. They then assigned subheadings to sections of the transcripts to present their findings. This systematic approach helped them build a complete picture of how faith healers' practices connected to their beliefs, traditions, and culture and how this understanding would help in developing a contextualized teaching content for Discipline and Ideas in Social Sciences (DISS), allowing these real-world cultural experiences to be integrated into the curriculum, thereby helping students understand complex social issues.

Ethical Considerations

This study rigorously upheld ethical standards and participant welfare, starting with securing ethical clearance from the University's review committee and fully complying with the Data Privacy Law of the Philippines. Protecting participants was paramount; the researchers minimized all potential risks and ensured no harm would come from involvement. Confidentiality was strictly maintained through data coding, secure storage, avoiding identifying details, and destroying identifying information post-use. Before data collection, all participants provided informed consent after thoroughly reviewing a committee-approved form detailing the study's purpose and their rights. Participation was voluntary, with a clear right to withdraw anytime without penalty. Participants were informed of the study's benefits, like improved teaching strategies, and any risks, such as potential data disclosure, were mitigated through strict handling procedures. A debriefing session followed data collection, allowing participants to ask questions and clarify the study. No monetary incentives were given, only a token of appreciation for their voluntary involvement. The researchers personally financed this study as an academic requirement, retaining sole publication rights unless the thesis adviser co-authored with proper attribution. Participants were not considered vulnerable, and no threats were present during data collection.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Despite advances in modern healthcare, faith healing remained a vital and deeply embedded aspect of Filipino society, highlighting the pervasive importance of spirituality in healing and the perceived complementary relationship between faith and conventional medicine. For many, it offered a holistic path to well-being, addressing spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions beyond mere lack of access to formal medical facilities. This reliance stemmed from a collective belief in divine intervention and ancestral traditions, fostering unity and reinforcing Filipino cultural identity. It was a testament to enduring faith, strong interconnectedness, and a commitment to holistic well-being, ensuring this spiritual legacy thrived alongside modern developments.



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1. Perspective in the Practice of Faith Healing

Theme

The Perspective of Faith Healing

1.1. A Mission to be Done

The faith healers' narratives consistently revealed a profound understanding of their practice as far more than a mere profession; they viewed faith healing as a sacred mission and a divine calling. This perspective underscored their belief that their purpose was aligned with a higher power, reflecting a deep spiritual commitment rather than simply a task or job. Their mission was intricately woven with their connection to God, spiritual convictions, and a strong desire to serve humanity. For these healers, faith healing was not just about applying techniques but about fulfilling a divinely appointed role. They consistently described themselves as instruments of God, emphasizing that their healing abilities were not inherent but gifts bestowed by a divine source. As Faith Healer 3 and 5 eloquently expressed:

Faith Healer 3: Nakikita ko sa aking sarili ay isang instrumento ng diyos para makatulong sa mga taong nangangailangan.

(I see myself as an instrument of God to help those in need)

Faith Healer 5: Nanakikita ko ang aking sarili bilang isang instrumento ng Diyos para makatulong sa kapwa na lubos na nangangailan ng pisikal na paggaling . At ako'y lubos na nagagalak na sa pamamagitan ko ay mga taong gumagaling sa kanilang karamdaman.

(I see myself as an instrument of God to help others who are in great need of physical healing. And I am truly glad that through me, people are recovering from their illnesses.)

The narratives unequivocally portrayed faith healing as a profound mission. Healers consistently viewed themselves not as independent practitioners but as instruments of God, working to alleviate suffering and bring healing to those in need (Shah et al., 2020). This perception imbued their work with a sacred quality, serving as a primary wellspring of motivation and meaning for them (Peprah et al., 2018). As instruments of faith, healers felt a powerful spiritual obligation to assist their communities by leveraging their healing abilities. This deep sense of mission enhanced their commitment to their practice and fostered a strong spiritual bond with the individuals they served (Gopichandran, 2015).

Beyond their divine calling, many faith healers also understood their practice as a mission toward tradition. Tradition was central to their work, providing the foundation and a guiding framework for their healing practices. As Faith Healer 15 stated:

Faith Healer 5: Nakikita ko ang mga gawi ko sa pagpapagaling bilang mahalaga sa buhay ko at sa pagtulong sa iba. Sinisiguro ko na tama at ayon sa tradisyon ang ginagawa ko, at naniniwala akong nakakatulong ito sa mga tao.

(I see my healing practices as important in my life, as well as helping others. I make sure that what I do is correct and follows tradition, and it helps people.)

For faith healers, their responsibility transcended mere curing; it was a sacred mandate encompassing a divine calling and a commitment to preserving tradition. They saw themselves as instruments of God, dedicated to alleviating suffering while ensuring their practices remained culturally rooted and respectful of ancestral wisdom. This dual mission was driven by selflessness and a profound commitment to serve, with personal gain taking a backseat. While acknowledging material benefits, healers prioritized their spiritual purpose, embodying a source of strength and hope for their communities. This deep sense of duty shaped their approach to healing and highlighted the vital role of community support in their sacred mission (Berdon et al., 2016; Peprah et al., 2018).

1.2. A Responsibility to be fulfilled

Beyond a sacred mission, faith healers consistently articulated their practice as a continuous responsibility demanding unwavering commitment. This dedication was deeply rooted in three key areas. First and foremost was their community. Healers viewed their role as a profound commitment to the well-being of others, necessitating care and diligence, as Faith Healers 1 and 7 expressed:



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Faith Healer 1: *Nalipay ako na nag tambalan ako kay nakakabulig ako ha iba nga tawo.*

(I am happy I am a healer because I can help others.)

Faith Healer 7: *Nakikita ko akun sarili na puro panbulong nga gin hihimo ko akun obligasyon na wary gin aaro nga waray kapalit.*

(I see myself as someone who only performs healing, and I make it my obligation without expecting anything in return)

Additionally, healers expressed a deep sense of national pride and faith in their work, viewing faith healing as a civic responsibility—a direct service to their people. Beyond their community, faith healers also considered their practice a responsibility to their families. It was not just a personal calling but a way to support loved ones, especially during difficult times. As Faith Healer 9 shared:

Faith Healer 9: *Karuyag ko la ngane na tak pamilya la tak buligan. Kay sugad dinhi ha Bagacay kay tak nanay patay naman, tambalan man adto. Hinin patay naman, hinin waray madadaopan hin lain sugad hit: lanti hit kabataan, mga may sakit, para akon.*

(I want to help my family. It is the same here in Bagacay because my mother has passed away, and I used to take care of her. Now that she has gone, no one else can look after the others, like the children or the sick. For me, it is important to help them.)

Faith healing was often a long-standing tradition, passed down through generations, viewed not just as a personal choice but as a family duty and obligation. Parents frequently taught their children the practices and beliefs surrounding faith healing. Many healers traced their abilities directly to their parents or grandparents, reinforcing that faith healing was an inherited tradition. As Faith Healer 2 and 10 shared:

Faith Healer 2: *Mula ang aking abilidad sa aking Lolo na ipinasa sa aking Ama at ipinasa naman sa Akin.*

(My ability comes from my grandfather, which was passed down to my father and then passed on to me)

Faith Healer 10: *An akn nanay tambalan, ginpasa ngan ginbalhin niya ha akon han namatay na hiya.*

(My mother was a healer; she passed it on to me when she died and transferred it to me.)

This suggested a spiritual transfer, where a departing healer bestowed their gift upon a chosen successor. This reinforced the belief that faith healing was not only a family legacy but a divine, generational responsibility that transcended the physical realm. Furthermore, faith healers consistently emphasize their responsibility, which involves humility in knowledge. As Faith Healer 6 stated:

Faith Healer 10: *Nakikita ko ang sarili ko bilang isang daluyan ng enerhiya at Liwanag.*

(I see myself as a channel of energy and light.)

This response highlighted a clear expression of humility. It underscored that healers viewed their abilities not as their own but as a gift or responsibility entrusted by a higher power, serving as the foundation for healing. As Faith Healer 8 shared:

Faith Healer 8: *Sa totoo lang, ako ay isang manggagamot ngunit hindi ko masasabi na ako ay isang experto o maraming kaalaman pag dating sa mga ganitong bagay dahil ang tungkulin ko ay ang mag pagaling ng kapwa. Para sa akin, nakikita ko ang aking sarili bilang isang simpleng mamamayan na tumutulong lamang sa mga nangangailangan.*

(To be honest, I am a healer, but I cannot say that I am an expert or have vast knowledge regarding these things because my role is to heal others. I see myself as just an ordinary person who is simply helping those in need.)

Healers did not see themselves as experts; they believed healing was not about their knowledge. Instead, their primary role was to help others on their healing journey (Dieumegard et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2020).



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2. Means of Performing Faith Healing

Theme

Means of Performing Faith Healing

2.1. Form of Faith Healing

Faith healing involves structured spiritual methods. This study identifies various techniques, with prayer being central. Whether formal or spontaneous, prayer invites divine healing (Jocano, 1967). A common type is Oral Prayer, which includes whispering—speaking softly for privacy or connection with the divine, as noted by Faith Healers 4 and 5:

Faith Healer 4: Ang ginagawa ko ay bago ako manggamot ako ay nanalangin ng taimtim sa aking amang nasa langit.

(What I do is, before I perform healing, I sincerely pray to my Father in heaven)

Faith Healer 5: Sa pamamagitan ng panalangin bago ako manggamot.

(Through prayer before I heal)

Faith healers demonstrate profound devotion, consistently invoking divine guidance and support. They believe healing is not merely a human effort but one aligned with a higher, spiritual purpose, emphasizing prayer as the crucial first step in the healing process (Rondilla et al., 2021). Beyond whispered prayers, the second key form is blowing. This involves speaking prayers while gently exhaling or blowing air onto the patient's head. This act is often seen as a symbolic release of energy or blessings, as Faith Healer 7 highlights:

Faith Healer 7: Mga banyos para mas madali an pag hilot ngan pag ampo"

(Baths/Oil to make massage and prayer easier)

Beyond prayer, faith healing also incorporated physical practices. Ritual bathing was a significant component, seen as more than just physical cleansing; it was a purification of the spirit that prepared the body to receive healing, often through practices like blowing (Del Fierro & Nolasco, 2013)—a third key form involved Natural Elements. Faith healers frequently integrated oils, herbs and leaves, water, and other natural substances into their healing practices. These elements were considered gifts from nature, possessing their inherent healing properties. When asked about the materials they used, Faith Healers 4 and 8 highlighted:

Faith Healer 4: Gumagamit ako ng kandila, herbal ugat at mga dahon sa aking pangagamot.

(I use candle, herbs, roots, and leaves, when I performing healing)

Faith Healer 8: Ang mga anyo na ginagamit ko sa pagsasagawa ng faith healing ay ang iba't ibang dahon na epektibo sa aking pangagamot.

(The forms I use in practicing faith healing are the various leaves that are effective in my healing practice)

Faith healers frequently use herbs and leaves, recognizing their specific healing properties for both body and spirit. Each plant offered unique benefits, depending on its type and the patient's condition. Consequently, healers transformed these plants into oils and medicines for their patients (Vos, 2019). This practice was further supported by Faith Healers 7 and 14:

Faith Healer 7: Mga banyos.

(Oils)

Faith Healer 14: Banyos, herbal ngan orasyon.

(Oils, Herbs, and prayer)

Faith healers often used their hands as instruments for both energy transfer and tactile engagement, working in conjunction with leaves and oils as natural remedies. This integrated approach highlighted a holistic view



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of health, blending physical remedies with spiritual elements. Through these practices, healers tap into both the natural and spiritual realms to bring about healing and well-being for their patients (Bibon, 2021). A fourth practice was that faith healers considered water a natural element with profound spiritual significance. They believed water could cleanse, purify, and facilitate healing. Faith Healer 1 directly affirmed this belief:

Faith Healer 1: *Makadto ako ha Pupua makuha ako bendeta na tubig, may sandal didto gin tutuslo ko iton, diri ko iton gin huhugasan kay bagan nakaminos daw ak hiton kan mama Mary.*

(I will go to Pupua to get the blessed water. There is a sandal there that I will touch. I do not wash it because it seems like it has a blessing from Mama Mary.)

Faith Healer 1's belief in water's spiritual power for healing and purification was profound. Their careful water use reflected their tradition's strong link between material elements and spiritual healing (Berdon et al., 2016). This use of natural materials connected their practices to indigenous knowledge and traditional medicine, underscoring the cultural heritage woven into faith healing (Gopichandran, 2015).

The fifth vital element in traditional healing was touch and massage, often seen in practices like *hilot*. These therapeutic massage techniques had long been recognized for their ability to address physical and spiritual ailments, primarily through physical touch. A healer, known as a *manghihilot*, typically begins by assessing the patient's body through palpation, focusing on areas like the head, chest, and pulse. Faith Healer 3 further emphasized this:

Faith Healer 3: *Sa pamamagitan ng hilot at orasyon.*

(Through massage and prayer or incantations)

Healers applied oils to the body to loosen muscles, reduce pain, and facilitate smooth movement during massage. However, despite these beneficial practices, some faith healers experienced significant pressure and burdens, as Faith Healer 12 mentioned:

Faith Healer 12: *Makuri gud it paghilot basta damo nak gin hihilot nga bari an kamot, mga tiil, yana kay dire naman ako nakakalakat dire na ako nakadto panhilot.*

(It is not easy to do hilot (traditional massage) when many areas, like the hands and feet, need to be massaged. Right now, I cannot walk anymore, so I cannot go anywhere to perform hilot.)

Healers shared that performing *hilot* could be emotionally and physically demanding, especially when many areas like the hands and chest required intense focus, demanding constant movement and pressure application. This personal struggle highlighted the broader challenges in *hilot* practice. Nevertheless, the use of touch not only built trust and comfort but also offered a more intimate and direct form of care, boosting the therapeutic outcome. In essence, the Prayer, Natural Elements, and Touch and Massage classifications revealed a comprehensive approach to faith healing, where spiritual rituals, natural remedies, and physical care are intertwined to facilitate healing (Rondilla et al., 2021).

2.2. Function of Faith Healing

Faith served as a core guiding principle for healers, embodying a set of beliefs that divine intervention, spiritual power, or a higher being could alleviate physical and mental ailments. This deep-seated faith connected several key aspects of their practice: selfless service, community responsibility, and faith as the fundamental foundation for all healing. First, selfless service drove healers to act with kindness and generosity without expecting anything in return. This commitment to helping others purely for their well-being was strongly highlighted by Faith Healers 2:

Faith Healer 2: *Ang tungkulin makatulong sa mga walang anuman na ating mga kababayan nais mabigyang lunas and kanilang mga karamdaman.*

(The duty to help our fellow countrymen, especially those in need, is to provide solutions for their ailments)

Faith healers overwhelmingly viewed selfless service as generosity and a profound spiritual and moral duty. They became vessels for healing, channeling their skills, beliefs, and compassion to serve their community (Caruz,



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2023). The second was an inherent sense of Community Responsibility that deeply motivated them; their role extended beyond personal healing to actively serving their community, as Faith Healer 9 highlighted:

Faith Healer 9: Karuyag ko la ngane na tak pamilya la tak buligan. Kay sugad dinhe ha Bagacay kay tak nanay patay naman, tambalan man adto. Hinin patay naman waray madadaopan hin lain sugad hit Kabataan, mga may sakit, para akon.

(I want to help my family because here in Bagacay, my mother is already dead, so I have to take care of them. Now that she has gone, there is no one to help the others, like the children and those who are sick. For me, it is important)

Healers often stepped in to offer alternative care, driven by personal belief in their abilities and a moral obligation to serve those underserved or excluded from the formal healthcare system (Nual Velez, 2021). The third crucial aspect was faith as a foundation for healing. Here, faith was not a passive belief but a powerful force that guided, supported, and empowered individuals throughout their healing journey. This could be broken down into two classifications: Guidance and Teaching and Spiritual Practice. Guidance and Teaching refer to the moral, philosophical, and spiritual concepts derived from faith traditions. As Faith Healer 6 highlighted:

Faith Healer 6: Ang pagiging tagapagsalita, tagapagturo.

(Being a preacher and teacher)

This highlighted how healers ensured their methods aligned with spiritual teachings and principles of faith. Their work was rooted in guiding others, offering physical interventions and spiritual direction. Through their guidance and teaching, faith healers emphasized the importance of instilling principles of faith and supporting spiritual practices for overall healing. They encouraged engaging in spiritual disciplines like prayer or specific rituals to regain balance, peace, and wholeness. Fourthly, Spiritual Practices involve active engagement in the healing process. Faith healers' responses illuminated how prayer, trust in divine guidance, and rituals played a role. As Faith Healer 1 mentioned:

Faith Healer 1: An nakakabulig ine ha akon pag tuo gud, waray na iba.

(Truly helps me in my faith, nothing else)

These practices powerfully reinforced the transformative power of prayer, highlighting the holistic nature of faith healing that extended beyond physical well-being to profoundly impact human belief and connection (Haque et al., 2018).

2.3. Value of Faith Healing

The insights gathered showed that faith healing practices held profound significance across life's personal, spiritual, and social aspects. This led to the first key aspect: Mabaskog nga pagtotoo (Revitalized Faith). The true value of faith healing lay in its ability to be a wellspring of strength, especially during times of struggle or illness, a sentiment directly echoed by Faith Healer 6:

Faith Healer 6: Ang halaga ng faith healing ay nakasalalay sa kakayahan nitong mag bigay ng emosyonal at spiritual na suporta.

(The value of faith healing lies in its ability to provide emotional and spiritual support)

Faith healing profoundly enriched one's spirituality, offering a vital source of hope and inner strength amidst life's challenges (Shah et al., 2020). It empowered believers and deepened their connection to a higher power. Essentially, faith healing uplifted those in need and fostered a stronger bond between individuals and their faith (Gopichandran, 2015). This led to the second aspect, Saved in Hope, where faith healing became a crucial source of physical relief and hope, especially when conventional medical care was out of reach. Healers shared experiences of patients turning to them after all other options had been exhausted, as Faith Healer 10 described:

Faith Healer 10: Oo kay kun di naupay sa ospital, tapos mapabulong ha akon nauupay man pud, kay kun ha ospital edi magasiko kun waray ka gastos.



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(Yes, because if they do not get better at the hospital, they come to me and get better. If you go to the hospital, you spend a lot of money, and if you do not have money, you have nothing. Doctors won't treat you if you do not have money)

This highlighted the significant challenges faced by the underprivileged and the crucial role faith healers played in offering an alternative. The healers consistently emphasized the inclusivity of their practice, extending help to everyone regardless of age, background, or region, whether they were children, the elderly, or individuals from diverse areas. As Faith Healer 11 stated:

Faith Healer 11: *An pag bulong nga akon gin bubuhat, nag dadara hin pag laom ngan nagiging maupay an ira sitwasyon. Dako an akon kalipay kon mkabulig.*

(The healing that I do brings hope and improves their situations. I felt great joy when I could help others)

Healers found fulfillment in offering physical healing and crucial emotional and spiritual support during people's most vulnerable moments. This holistic approach embodied the essence of faith healing: a practice driven by empathy, service, and an unwavering belief in divine intervention (Tremlett, 2014). Third, faith healing served as an immediate health solution, particularly in remote areas with limited access to conventional medical care. Here, it provided a vital service to those who might otherwise have no way to address their health concerns, as highlighted by Faith Healers 2:

Faith Healer 2: *Mahalaga ito sapagkat may mga pag kakataon na malayo ang isang lugar sa bayan at wala silang ibang mallapitan na maaring makapag bigay ng agarang lunas sa kanilang mga karamdaman. At sa mga kapos palad kong kayat sa amin sila lumalapit.*

(This is important because there are instances where a place is far from town, and they have no one else to turn to who can provide immediate relief for their ailments)

Faith healing was vital in marginalized communities, especially where healthcare was lacking. It became a beacon of hope, offering physical relief and emotional and spiritual comfort (Nual Velez, 2021). This practice filled critical gaps in healthcare, particularly for remote or underserved populations, by providing immediate help, supporting those in financial need, and offering an alternative when traditional medical services were inaccessible (Berdon, 2016). Fourth, faith healing transcended physical treatment; it was a spiritual practice deeply rooted in trust and belief in divine power for healing, as Faith Healer 4 directly stated:

Faith Healer 4: *Espesyal ang faith healing dahil minsan may mga sakit tayo na hindi kayang ayusin ng mga doctor at gamot. Sa mga panahong iyon, and paniniwal sa Diyos at ang pag kakaroon ng pag titiwal ay makatutulong sa ating pakiramdam.*

(Faith healing is special because there are times when we have illnesses that doctors and medicine cannot fix. During such times, belief in God and trust can help us feel better)

Faith healing offered a spiritual alternative, often complementing or replacing traditional medicine, especially when access was limited. It operated on the belief that divine intervention and unwavering individual faith could bring about healing (Relon, 2018). This emphasized belief and trust in divine providence as a critical factor in a patient's recovery journey (Peprah et al., 2018). Fifth, faith healing also provided a profound sense of personal fulfillment and satisfaction for the healers themselves. They expressed joy and relief in witnessing healing, which directly enhanced their well-being, as Faith Healer 1 directly conveyed:

Faith Healer 1: *Nalilipay ako kay tambalan ako, kay nakakabulig ako basta tagan la ako maupay na panlawas.*

(I am happy to be a healer because I can help others as long as I am given good health)

Healers found deep satisfaction when patients validated their practices, confirming their positive impact on individuals and the community (Varela, 2023). In the Philippines, faith healing was a deeply ingrained tradition, intertwining history, culture, spirituality, and society, offering healing and spiritual strength. Through prayer, natural elements like oils, herbs, and water, and touch therapies such as *hilot*, faith healers provided holistic care that



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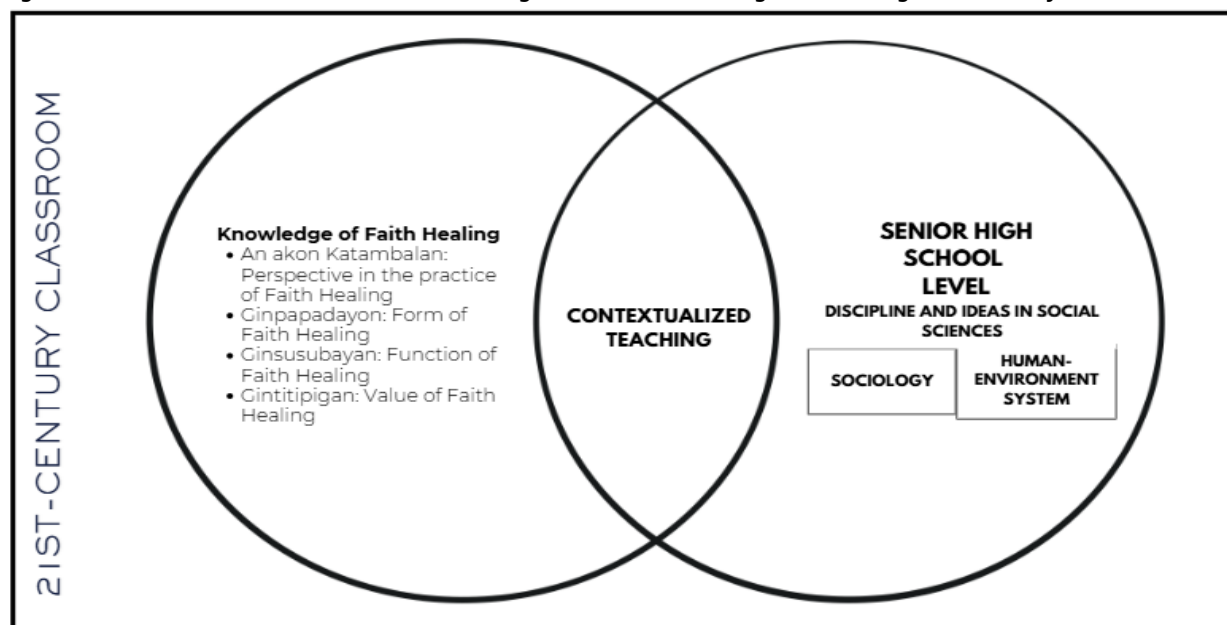
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E - ISSN 1908-3181

blended spiritual and natural remedies. Their role extended beyond mere treatment; they offered comfort, guidance, and hope, especially to those marginalized or without access to modern medicine. Faith healing was a sacred mission and responsibility; healers viewed their abilities as a divine trust to be used selflessly. This inherited practice helped preserve traditional knowledge and spiritual wisdom, underscoring the importance of cultural preservation even amidst modern medical advancements, particularly as many Filipinos, especially in Samar, continued to seek alternative solutions from faith healers. Despite healthcare progress, faith healing remained vital to Filipino society, highlighting spirituality's role in healing and demonstrating how faith and medicine could coexist. It fostered unity and strengthened cultural identity through a shared belief in divine intervention. It stood as a testament to enduring faith, interconnectedness, and dedication to well-being, preserving a tradition central to Filipino identity for generations.

3. Faith Healing in/and the Twenty-First Century Classroom

The narratives collected by this study vividly highlighted the crucial role of faith-healing insights in cultural education, underscoring their significance in understanding the local heritage.

Figure 1. Educational Framework of Cultural Integration of Faith Healing in Senior High School Subject



Cultural education was vital for national identity and preserving indigenous knowledge. In the Philippines, the Philippine Cultural Education Program (PCEP), mandated by RA 10066 (National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009) and further supported by RA 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013), advocated for integrating cultural heritage, like faith healing, into the Senior High School (SHS) curriculum, specifically within the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand. The K-12 system, which introduced SHS in 2016-2017, served approximately 28 million students across public and private institutions as of the 2022-2023 school year, with HUMSS consistently being one of the most enrolled strands. This study proposed an educational framework where the "knowledge of faith healing" (perspectives, forms, functions, values) was integrated into HUMSS subjects like Sociology and DISS, creating "contextualized teaching" within a 21st-century classroom. This approach blended indigenous wisdom with formal education, promoting cultural pride, correcting misconceptions, and fostering multidisciplinary learning. While integrating such rich cultural content, educators needed to build cultural competence and address the challenges of balancing tradition with modern educational approaches, as highlighted by laws that preserve cultural properties and practices. This model, specifically exploring faith healing in Samar (a region known for its strong indigenous healing traditions), aimed to deepen Filipino students' understanding of their heritage and equip them with analytical skills



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for global engagement, emphasizing cultural preservation without endorsing faith healing as a substitute for professional medical treatment.

Conclusions

Faith healers saw their practice as a sacred mission, a profound responsibility, and an act of humility, driven by the belief that their abilities were a divine gift for the greater good, a tradition passed down through generations to serve God and the community. In the Philippines, faith healing profoundly connected religious practices, cultural beliefs, and community values, manifesting in diverse Forms (prayer, natural elements, *hilot*), serving the function of selfless, spiritually-rooted service, and offering value through personal fulfillment for healers and accessible solutions for the marginalized. Integrating these aspects into the Senior High School curriculum, particularly in HUMSS, offered immense value by helping students understand indigenous knowledge, cultural resilience, and the multifaceted role of spirituality in society, thus fostering a holistic and culturally sensitive perspective on health and social issues and enriching their academic experience while promoting appreciation for the Philippines' unique cultural heritage.

Recommendations

To support the integration of faith healing with modern healthcare, ensuring both safety and cultural respect—a key value highlighted in the conclusion's discussion of faith healing's societal role—several recommendations emerged from the participant narratives. The government advocated for legal recognition and protection of traditional healing practices, establishing clear regulations (as encouraged by Republic Act No. 10066 and the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009) to preserve cultural traditions without compromising public health. Concurrently, communities actively promoted educational programs that raised awareness about the benefits of integrating faith healing with conventional medicine. At an individual level, people strove to understand each approach's strengths and limitations. Finally, future researchers could use this study as a foundation to further explore faith healing traditions, contributing new insights to enhance understanding of their role in overall healthcare and reinforcing its "value" as a complementary approach to well-being.

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P - ISSN 2984-7842
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