

## **Folk Healing Narratives: A Grounded Theory**

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### **Abstract**

*This study collected, transcribed, translated, and categorized the folk healing narratives from Magarao, Camarines Sur to reveal the shared meanings and derived a theory about them. The researcher used descriptive method to describe the existing folk healing narratives and contact method was used in gathering the data then followed the process of Grounded Theory Method. The collected narratives from the nine (9) folk healers were classified into four (4) categories namely; pagbulong sa paagi kan gabay (healing through the help of supernatural being), pagbulong sa paagi kan ritwal (healing through rituals), pagbulong sa paagi kan pagsanib (healing through possession), and pagbulong sa paagi kan namanang kaaraman (healing through acquired knowledge). From the categories of folk healing narratives, the researcher extracted the shared meanings that resulted to the four (4) stages of folk healing: pag-apod (calling), pag-isi (knowing), pag-umay (healing), and pag-arang (offering). This study concluded that for folk healers to perform folk healing, they combine their skills and gift of healing that was endowed to them by the Supreme Being. The extracted shared meanings reflect how people who adhere to folk healing view the world; this is because of their similarities in experiences. Shared meanings which are present in these modern times can be traced back from the practices and beliefs of the ancient Bikolanos reflected in the Bikol literature. This study recommends the future researchers to conduct similar studies specifically in the shared meanings and practices in the other aspects of the society.*

**Keywords-** Folk Narratives, Folk Healing, Grounded Theory

### **INTRODUCTION**

Literature reflects human experiences. People love reading and watching literature because in doing so they see a reflection of who they are, what they do, and what they want to become. Literature may come in different genres, but still, it reveals so much about people-their culture, beliefs, traditions, and even their aspirations. According to the Anglo-Indian novelist Salman Rushdie (1948), literature is where you get to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and human spirit. Moreover, it mimics the different facets of the society- education, politics, economics, entertainment, and health. Folklore is one of the oldest genres of literature. Gilbas (2015) defines folklore as the “lore of the folk” which means the knowledge of the people. The different genres of folklore-myths, epics, and legends-reflect people’s culture and tradition.

Culture and tradition would include the knowledge and beliefs on how people live and their characteristics. Part of culture and tradition is the knowledge and beliefs of people on maintaining health. Since antiquity, people would always seek for someone or something to prolong life. Health and healing have been part of people’s lives to preserve the human race. Similarly, since literature is a reflection of human experiences, the passion to maintain the human race is evident in various

literary texts, from English-American literature, Afro-Asian literature, and even in Philippine literature. These literature reflect the knowledge and beliefs of people and how they give importance to health and human race. Practices and beliefs of the Bikolanos to maintain wellness were reflected in the folk narratives that are still evident in this generation. A form of healing that has been practiced since the time of the early Filipinos is folk healing.

Faith healing (the contemporary name of folk healing), according to Merriam Webster Dictionary , is a method of treating diseases by prayer and exercise of faith in God. How people are cured by this method of healing has been a very interesting topic. From the blog of Russel Lorenzo, he cited that since time immemorial, our ancestors relied on traditional healing methods to cure diseases. Philippines has always been rich in folk narratives about different beliefs, rituals, and indigenous healing practices. The fact that folk healing still exists in this modern period, only proves that narratives about it were passed on from one generation to another. These folk narratives are significant in understanding one's cultural heritage. Gilbas (2015) said that every person should have a better understanding of his cultural heritage. Thus, the researcher as an educator sees that it is important for the students to know about their past and understand the unrecorded practices of people in the community where they belong through literature.

Meder (2010) cited that folk narratives are an integral part of cultural heritage and a valuable resource for historical and contemporary comparative folk studies. They reflect moral, values, beliefs, and identities of groups and individual over time.

Despite the importance of literature (in this case folk narratives) in people's cultural identity, it is sad to say that there are very few researchers who do related studies in Bicol region.

In this study, using the collected folk healing narratives from the nine (9) folk healers of Magarao, Camarines Sur, the researcher unfolded the shared meanings of folk healers and derived a theory about folk healing.

### Objectives of The Study

The purpose of this study was to collect, transcribe, translate, and categorize the folk healing narratives from Magarao, Camarines Sur and reveal the shared meanings of folk healing narratives and derive a theory about it. To do this, the researcher used contact method in gathering

the folk healing narratives. Personal interviews to the folk healers and patients were conducted to get the data needed along with the observation and participation during folk healing sessions. Moreover, the researcher gathered field notes, photos, videos, and recordings while conducting the data collection procedures from the folk healers. Also, to validate the folk healing narratives, she also interviewed peers of the folk healers and patients of the informants.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used Descriptive Method to describe the collected folk healing narratives. Moreover, procedures of Grounded Theory Method (GTM) which was pioneered by **Glacier and Strauss** in 1960's [6]: open, axial, selective, and theoretic sampling were employed to come up with the categories and theory on folk healing. Below are the steps of GTM:

### Open Coding

Open coding is the first step of data analysis in which the researcher was able to divide the gathered data into four (4) preliminary categories of the folk healing narratives, these are: (1) *pagbulong sa paagi kan gabay* (healing through the help of a supernatural being), (2) *pagbulong sa paagi kan ritwal* (healing through ritual), (3) *pagbulong sa paagi kan sanib* (healing through possession), and (3) *pagbulong gamit an namanang kaaraman* (healing through the acquired knowledge).

### Axial and Selective Coding

The second and third stages of data analysis are axial and selective coding. In axial coding, the researcher was able to name concepts of shared meanings reflected in the folk healing narratives of the different types of healing. These are images of saints, *anting-anting* (amulets), communicate with the *gabay* (supernatural being), prayer before and after the healing sessions, touching and massaging, blowing with prayers, diagnosing through rituals, *paghilot* (bone setting), and diagnosing through *pagpulso* (pulse taking). Then, in selective coding, the researcher categorized the shared meanings into four (4) major concepts which are *pag-apod* (calling), *pag-isi* (knowing), *pag-umay* (healing), and *pag-arang* (offering).

### Theoretic Sampling

To confirm and validate the researcher's concept of the stages of folk healing which are *pag-apod* (calling), *pag-isi* (knowing), *pag-umay* (healing), and *pag-arang* (offering), she made a questionnaire and purposively chose five (5) folk healers from other municipalities to answer them. She also conducted an interview with these folk healers to support her theory on folk healing.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study resulted to four (4) categories of folk healing narratives. These are the *pagbulong sa paagi nin gabay* (healing through the help of supernatural being), *pagbulong sa paagi kan ritwal* (healing through rituals), *pagbulong sa paagi nin pagsanib* (healing through possession), and *pagbulong sa paagi kan namanang kaaraman* (healing through acquired knowledge).

### Categories of Folk Healing Narratives

*Pagbulong sa paagi kan gabay* (healing through the help of supernatural being) is the first identified category by the researcher as a result of the open coding. This refers to narratives of folk healing that involves the help and guidance of supernatural beings such as *diwata* (fairy) and *engkanto* (beings that can't be seen by people), saints, or the Supreme Being. There are five (5) folk healing narratives that fall under this category.

Folk Healer 1's narrative of healing is classified under this category. He is being guided by a spirit who whispers in his ears after asking the name of the patient during diagnostic procedures. The spirit's presence is also there during the whole healing process. Folk healer 1 also confirmed that he is being guided by *Amang Hinulid* that is why the oil that he uses in treating his patient is from *Hinulid, Calabanga*. However, he did not confirm that *Amanag Hinulid* is the one who helps him during healing sessions.

Narrative of healing of Folk Healer 2 is also considered under this category. During the interview and observation, she confirmed that her *gabay* is *Ina – Nuestra Señora de Peñafrancia* of Bikol. She performs *pag-inibang* (healing modality to cure *sibang* or *usog* caused by unpleasant odor or from a spirit), *pagsantigwar* (healing the sick due to supernatural cause), or *paghilot* (bone setting) just like Folk Healer 1. However, unlike Folk healer 1, *Ina* only communicates with her in her dreams but she claimed that she could feel *Ina's* presence during her healing sessions.

Folk Healer 3's story of healing is also under this category for she claims that she is being guided by Sto. Niño or the Child Jesus. Aside from the guidance of Sto. Niño, a *diwata* (fairy) is also protects her and helps her during healing sessions; she calls her "Diwatang Tubig" (water fairy). She can determine illness that is caused by lost souls (like *usog nin tawong dae nahihiling*). She had the same healing modalities with Folk healer 1 and 2, however, she has a different way of dealing with these illnesses; she does blowing of the head that would cure the patient.

Folk healer 4's narrative tells about the *gabay* though the presence of Sta. Salud of Calabanga. Aside from the saint that guides her, her story also tells about "spirit doctors" that help her during healing sessions. Though, she did not elaborate on this part of the story and the researcher got a non-verbal cue to move on with the topic. The same with Folk Healer 2, her "gabay" (Sta. Salud of Calabanga) communicates through her dreams, and assures her to confidently perform healing for the presence of the *gabay* (supernatural being) is always there.

Narrative of healing of Folk healer 5 tells a different way of using the *gabay* (supernatural being). The narrative reflects that after Folk Healer 5 diagnosed the patient by touching the forehead and analyzed what the patient feels by reading his palm, he would ask his *gabay* (supernatural being) to go to places where the patient works, lives, and stays for the past days. The *gabay* (supernatural being) will go back after few minutes to report about what happened and he would able to bring with him the *engkanto* or supernatural being that caused the illness of the patient for them to discuss and make amends.

The researcher observed that the folk healers were very careful in narrating about their *gabay* (supernatural being). The researcher noticed that when the conversation leads to the spirit, *engkanto* (being that can't be seen by people), or *diwata* (fairy) that guides them, they become very cautious with the information that they share.

"Gabay" means "someone who guides". In the case of the five (5) folk healing narratives that were categorized under *pagbulong sa paagi kan gabay* (healing through the help of supernatural being), the researcher can say that it is connected to how strong the faith of the folk healers to their religion, Roman Catholic. Guided by someone who is omniscient and omnipotent or could do things that cannot be explained by science makes them unique in terms of what they can do. Based on the narratives, these folk healers consider themselves as 'chosen ones' for the gift of healing (*para sa balaog kan pagbulong*). They believe that because they were able to surpass the trials that

were given to them by someone who is powerful, they have strong faith that makes them distinct. It is evident in the photos and videos collected by the researcher that each folk healer keeps images of saints and some of them does the folk healing process in front of these images. The researcher thinks that conducting their healing sessions in front of these images makes them feel worthy of the gift that they want to show in front of the image of the Supreme being that they use their gift for the benefit of others and not for themselves. That is why aside from the healing session, payment is also done in front of the altar; four (4) of these folk healers don't impose amounts.

It was also noticed by the researcher that three (3) of these folk healing narratives about *gabays* also tell about amulets or anting-anting. Results of the interview revealed that these amulets are still related with the *gabays* (supernatural being) of the folk healers.

These finding found support from the study of Maria Sharon Arriola of UP- Diliman who researched on the "Spirituality among the Bikolanos: A Perspective in Contemporary Practices" in 2011, she said that one of the themes that provide meanings to Bicolano's belief system that affects their contemporary life is illness and healing practices and rituals. She mentioned the *parabulong* (healer) have chosen by the spirit/supernatural being as a medium to heal the people. She also cited what (Cannell 1999) said that there is a bond between the medium (the healer) and the spirit which is formed once the *parabulong* accepted the role bestowed upon him/her and that is not to accept any payment especially from those who are poor. In return for their sacrifices, they will be reciprocated with good health, happiness, and peace of mind.

Study of Paderan (2016) agrees with the findings of this research that folk healing is more of a gift from a supernatural being. These folk healers treat their information on healing with utmost confidentiality that not all of the healers can pass this gift to the next generation unless, a supernatural being permits it. This is the reason why probably Lorenzo (2012) said that forms of traditional healing in the Philippines are more complex and harder to understand.

*Pagbulong sa paagi nin ritwal* (healing through rituals) is the second category that refers to folk healing narratives that involve ritualistic procedures: the uttering of chants or *orasyon* and prayers, and the use of healing paraphernalia such as candles, plate, jar, holy water, stick, coin, and oil. Four (4) folk healing narratives fall under this category.

Folk healing narratives of Folk Healer 2 also falls under *pagbulong sa paagi kan ritwal* (healing through rituals) for she uses ritualistic procedures especially in diagnosing her patients.

Through her paraphernalia candle, plate, and oil, she will be able to determine the place and the spirit that caused the illness of the patient.

Narrative of Folk Healer 4 reflects the same diagnostic procedure is being implemented in her healing sessions in which she would use the soot of the candle on the plate to determine the whereabouts of the patient and what kind of supernatural being or spirit caused the disease. According to her narrative, she also uses Holy water in healing.

Folk healing narrative of Folk Healer 6 tells a different ritualistic procedure during healing sessions- *pagtatawas*. Folk healer 6 does not just use this as a diagnostic procedure, but also as a healing procedure to cure the patient. *Pagtatawas* include healing paraphernalia such as *tawas* (potassium alum) and candle. Furthermore, the healing procedure was induced with a chant or *orasyon* (that was never understood by the researcher for she only heard sounds not words) along with blowing to cure the patient.

Folk healing narratives of Folk healer 7 fall under this category. Her narratives tell that she uses a small jar, a pitcher of water, a stick, a ten-centavo coin, and popped rice in her healing ritual.

Rituals in the context of the Filipinos are understood as practices that involve prayers and offerings done in a step by step procedure. Tracing the Bikolano history, Bikolanos perform ancient rituals like *hidhid*, *atang*, and *sagugurang* intended for different occasions and purpose. In relation to the folk healers, ritual is part of the healing process intended for the purpose to heal the patient. The ritual must follow the intended process or it will not be effective or the goal of the folk healer will not be achieved.

The researcher can say that *pagbulong sa paagi kan ritwal* (healing through rituals) is both related to faith and the knowledge of conducting the ritual transferred from one family member to another or *naipapamana*.

Findings above show that folk healing narratives under this category claim that folk healers can see and communicate with spirits; some of them are possessed or were able to witness possession. This reveals that folk healers who perform *pagbulong sa paagi kan ritwal* (healing through rituals) should have the distinct ability to see and communicate with spirits and supernatural beings to cure patients. The same with *pagbulong sa paagi kan gabay* (healing through the help of supernatural being), the folk healer believe that they are 'chosen individuals' who need to perform a critical task for the Supreme Being.

Moreover, aside from being chosen to have the gift to communicate and see spirits and supernatural beings, the findings also reveal that knowledge on ritualistic procedure was said to be taught by their family members who are also folk healers.

These findings of the researcher is related to information found in the Terminal Report of Mansueto et al. (2015), according to them, there is a folk healing modality in Siquijor called *gipalaktan* in which the folk healer will pray Latin prayers to call the *engkantos* (beings that can't be seen) who caused the illness of the patient. The use of healing paraphernalia is also evident in their report, like in performing *sondal*, Latin prayers will be placed in a bottle blessed with Holy water and salt. *Tigi sa papel* also uses soot of the candle to reveal the name of the person or being/ creature that cause of the disease.

These rituals as mentioned earlier can be traced back to the practices of the ancient Filipinos, the *babaylans* in Visayas would perform rituals using *kamangyan* (incense) to appease forest sprits and drive illness away from their village. The Bikolanos appease *Gugurang* (the good god) by performing a ritual or sacrifice called *Atang*. It is true that practices of the Filipinos may evolve but the concept that there are people in this world who can act as intermediaries between human and deities, good and evil, and the things that can be seen and cannot be seen is still evident in this contemporary time. Again, not just by Filipinos but also other cultures, Ireland believe in the healing powers of the 'seventh son and in Northern Thailand, the *Mor Suang* (spirit healer) who performs series of ceremonies and incantations by calling on the spiritual essence of his patient and connecting with his spirit guides for assistance.

There are three (3) folk healing narratives that fall under the category of *pagbulong sa paagi kan pagsanib* (healing through possession). This category refers to narratives of healing that tell about the possession of the body of a folk healer by a supernatural being like an *engkanto* (beings that can't be seen), it may be a saint or by the Supreme Being to be able to perform healing.

Healing narratives of Folk Healer 5 do not just qualify in *pagbulong sa paagi kan gabay* (healing through the help of supernatural being) for his stories also tell about *pagbulong sa paagi kan pagsanib* (healing through possession). During healing sessions, aside from his "gabay" (supernatural being) that he sends on a mission to know the whereabouts of the patients, he is also possessed by a saint. These saints possessed him on schedule: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

A narrative of Folk Healer 6 also reflects healing through possession but unlike the narrative of Folk Healer 5, her story is about how she is being possessed by an *engkanto* (beings that can't be seen) who is a doctor in their world. According to the one-on-one interview of the researcher with this *engkanto* (when he was inside the body of Folk Healer 6), he possesses the body of the folk healer because he wanted to help the people in this world who suffer from diseases caused by the people in his world. He chose Folk Healer 6 because of her good characteristics which are difficult to find in other people these days.

Folk healer 7 healing narratives also involve *pagbulong sa paagi kan pagsanib* (healing through possession). Though it happens rarely, there are still instances that the *engkanto* who caused the illness (*naibanan*) of her patients possess her body. The reason of the possession of her body was not clearly elaborated, but she made clear that she can still perform the healing procedures though after the possession, she felt very exhausted.

In this category, it was observed by the researcher that there are healing procedures that are significant such as blowing to cure, touching and massaging using healing paraphernalia, praying, and ritual. It is probably the reason why this category overlaps with the other categories. Since there are overlapping concepts in this category with the others, *pagbulong sa paagi kan pagsanib* (healing through possession) also reflects notions like being the 'chosen one' to receive the gift of healing (or *balaog kan pagbulong*). This is supported by what Stuart (2012) said, that most of the folk healers in the Philippines consider their gift of healing as God-given. It is a calling from a supernatural being that's why their healing practices are infused with prayers, rituals, and meditation with the Holy Spirit. Manzanan (2004) mentioned in his book that in the context of the belief that the spirit world of humans is for evil or for good, there is a need for the services of ritual specialists who can communicate with the spirits, to appease the bad spirits or entreat the good spirits to bestow their blessings on human community. Arriola (2011) cited in her research that said about the people in Calabanga, Camarines Sur who still believe in different kinds of *tawo* (people that cannot be seen), divided them different classes with precise characteristics and locations (spirit of the air, land, water and earth). The diseases which cannot be treated by conventional medicine are brought to a *parabulong* (folk healer) to ask for healing through *santiguar* – the healers will be transformed into divination or possession in order to talk to the spirit or to calm down the aggrieved *tawo* (Cannell, 1999).

*Pagbulong sa paagi kan namanang kaaraman* (healing through acquired knowledge) is a category that refers to folk healing narratives that talk about the use of the knowledge of healing that were passed from one family member to another. Five (5) folk healing narratives that fall under this category tell how healing modalities are acquired through apprenticeship and observation.

The narrative of healing of Folk Healer 4 falls under this category for she was taught by her aunt who was also a folk healer in Magarao. The Latin prayers that she daily utters were taught by her aunt. She spent years of apprenticeship to her aunt who used to take in Calabanga for the so called “*gabas-gabas*”; a “*panata*” (devotion) of her aunt.

The folk healing narrative of Folk Healer 3 can also be categorized in this category. Her narrative states that she learned some of her knowledge in healing from her father. According to her, she was able to observe the ways of *paghilot* (bone setting) and herbal medicine from her father who was also a folk healer.

The healing narratives about *pagbulong balos* (healing swollen breasts) and *pag-inibang* (healing modality to cure *sibang or usog* caused by unpleasant odor or from a spirit) and by Folk Healer 8 fall under this category. His narrative reflects that he spent long apprenticeship under his aunt in Sorsogon who was also a folk healer. Moreover, his narrative tells that he also shared his knowledge on these healing modalities with his nephew who is also now practicing folk healing.

Folk healer 7’s narrative of healing tells that she was trained by her grandfather in her dreams. The ritual and the materials which are included in *pagsantigwar* (healing illness caused by supernatural beings) were shared to her. She also added that her knowledge of herbal medicine is acquired by trainings she attended and one of those was the training that was held in UP Los Baños (convention of folk healers) in 1992.

The narratives of Folk Healer 9 reflect that his parents were also well-known bone setters in Magarao. The knowledge of *paghilot* (bone setting) and *pagpupulso* (pulse taking) was passed to him through apprenticeship and observation. He added that he also passed his knowledge to his children.

Data above states that all folk healing narratives fall under this category for they show that folk healers learned their knowledge of *pag-inibang* (healing modality to cure *sibang or usog* caused by unpleasant odor or from a spirit), *paghilot* (bone setting), *pagsantigwar* (healing illness

caused by supernatural beings), and herbal medicine through apprenticeship, training, and observation from relatives who are also folk healers. This is supported by what Stuart (2012) said in his blog that Filipino folk healers learned their knowledge from hand-me-down practices and long period of apprenticeship with an elder or local folk healer. They take years of patience to study the lore, rituals, and modalities of diagnosis that includes prayers, *bulong* (whisper), *orasyon* (chants), and the use of medicinal plants similar with folk healers in Vietnam who also takes years of training to acquire the knowledge of pulse taking as diagnostic procedure.

Based on the narratives, these folk healers under this category are not just considered as “chosen ones” but also skilled health workers. They combine their knowledge of folk medicine with their gift of healing from the spirits, *engkanto* (being that can’t be seen), *diwata* (fairy), saints, or the Supreme Being to effectively do their craft. This is the same with what Mansueto et al. (2015) [ mentioned in their Terminal Report that aside from the beliefs of the Suquijor folk healers that they are chosen by God, they are also taught by family members who are also folk healers. This is parallel to what Licauco (1999) said as cited by Portugal (2009) that folk healers who know *paghilot* (bone setting) are people who are skilled in sprains and disabled joints also heal through saliva, blowing, and whispering the affected areas for they are also endowed by the divinities.

### Shared Meanings

The first stage is *pag- apod* (calling). Folk healing narratives reflect that this is the stage in which a folk healer prepares himself/herself for the day intended for healing session. In this stage, based on the result of the interview of the researcher, folk healing narratives depict that folk healers prepare themselves by praying and meditating to be able to communicate with God, Mama Mary, Jesus, and The Holy Spirit or with his/her “*gabay/s*”. Narratives of Folk Healers 5, 6, and 7 tell that this is the time that they meditate to find peace and to give way to the spirit that will possess their bodies. In this stage of healing, folk healers consider their images of saints/ God/ Mama Mary, and “*anting-anting*” or amulet as very important symbols of their faith so that they could able to perform their noble tasks.

The second stage is *pag-isi* (knowing). Folk healing narratives depict that this is the stage in which folk healers determine the cause of the illness of the patient. Diagnostic procedures may be in the form of *pagpupulso* (pulse taking), *pagritwal* (rituals), and palm reading. The folk healing

narratives of Folk Healers 1, 3, 5, 8, and 9 tell that they diagnose through *pagpupulso*. The folk healing stories of Folk Healers 2 and 7 reveal that they do diagnostic procedure through *pagritwal* (ritual) using their paraphernalia such as plate, candle, stick, small jar, ten-peso coin, water, and popped rice. On the other hand, the story of Folk Healer 5 tells a different way to diagnose; he would touch the forehead of the patient then look at his palm like he is reading something on it, then asks questions to patient with regard to what s/he feels. He would also look into the palm of the patient and compare the small fingers; if one finger is longer than the other, the patient is *naibanan* (ill due to supernatural being).

Diagnostic procedure is important in the folk healing process to know what should be the appropriate modality to be used by the folk healers to cure the patient.

The third stage is *pag-umay* (healing). Folk healing narratives reflect that this is the stage in which the folk healer will employ the healing modality that will cure the illness of the patient. For patients who are *naibanan* or sick due to supernatural causes like *engkanto* (beings that can't be seen), *kapre/tikbalang* (humanoid creature with the head of a horse), *dwende/nuno* (dwarf), and *lamang lupa* (creatures who live in other dimensions), the folk healer will do *pagsantigwar*. Folk Healers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 are the folk healers that practice *pagsantigwar*. Though seven (7) of them practice this modality, they have different ways in implementing it. Folk healers 1, 3, and 5 communicate with their *gabays* (supernatural being) or directly with the spirit to make amends to cure the patient. Folk healers 4, 2, 6, and 7 use *pagritwal* (ritual) to call the attention of the spirit that cause the illness of the patient for the same purpose of making amends and ask for forgiveness.

If the patient needs *paghilot* (bone setting), the folk healer will do traditional massage or a physical manipulation on the affected area. In some cases, the folk healers will place a "*tapal*" (medicinal leaves) to make sure that the patient will be cure.

There are also patients that need *panginginibang* (healing modality to cure *sibang or usog* caused by unpleasant odor or from a spirit). A type of healing modality to cure *sibang or usog* caused by unpleasant odors. Further, according to Folk Healer 3, this can be from a mortal being or from a spirit; this happens when the patient encountered a person or spirit who is exhausted and has not eaten anything. This can make the patient to vomit, experience nausea, LBM, and paleness. Folk healers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 practice *panginginibang* (healing modality to cure *sibang or usog* caused by unpleasant odor or from a spirit). Like other modalities, folk healers have their

different ways of doing this. Folk healer 1, 2, and 4 use oil to massage the stomach and head of the patient while Folk healers 3 and 5 use blowing with prayers and Folk healer 7 and 8 use *buyo and bunga* (betel nut and betel leaf).

The fourth stage is *pag-arang* (offering). Narratives of healing by the folk healers share meanings in the stage of *pag-arang* because it was observed by the researcher that all of them needs to pray after the healing session, it may be in Latin or Bikol for as long as they need to express their gratitude for the success of the healing sessions and ask for more strength (physical and spiritual) to continue their craft. For folk healers who have *gabays*, they take some time to communicate with them and express their gratitude. *Pag-arang* (offering) is not just true to folk healers but also to their patients. In this stage of folk healing, patients are asked to pray for the complete recovery from their illness.

These folk healing narratives show that folk healers, as well as their patients have shared meanings on folk healing because they have the same experiences on how they acquired the gift of healing. They are “chosen” and they were also trained to do this craft by apprenticeship and observation. Patients also experienced these shared meanings for many of them confirmed that they were healed.

According to Arriola (2011), Bikolanos still adhere to the practice of their faith whether institutional or folk despite of the growing interest in electronic media of the younger generation. She highlighted three words (3): Power, Reciprocity, and Sympathy. Power is related to the spirituality of the intimate connections between the people and the venerated saints or spirits and how this framework of power relations is translated in the domestic and social levels. She said that power summarizes the people’s attitude and beliefs toward sacrifices and penance, devotions to saints, submission to the tasks as healers. Reciprocity or the give-and-take relation is manifested in the humble acceptance of the healers as mediums personally hand-picked by spirits to heal people in exchange for any form of help from the spirit in case any deplorable situations befall on the healer. This is also seen in their deep devotion to the Virgin Mary and saints through novena prayers, sacrifices, and other forms of “*panata*” (devotion). Sympathy or simply pity is articulated in the practice of healing. The spirits do not allow fixed payments to be made or given. Healing is said to be administered to those who could not afford the expensive treatments in hospitals and for purchasing conventional medicines.

According to Bascom (1953) as cited by Amador (2011), folklore serves to validate the culture which means it reflects traditions and the unique identity of the people which gives them the concept of who they are in this modern time. The shared meanings reflected in the different stages of folk healing has been a living tradition of the Bikolanos that can be traced back hundred of years ago. It is evident in Philippine literature; myths about *Sitan*, the counterpart of Satan had agents named *Manggagaway*, *Hukluban*, and *Mangkukulam* who were believed by the ancient Filipinos to cause diseases and change themselves as false healers so that they could kill people.

Moreover, shared meanings on traditional healing are also reflected in Bikol literature. Myths helped the ancient Bikolanos to have a sense of direction and helped them explain everything; from the origin of mankind to the existence of diseases. Stories about how people appease *Gugurang* by performing a ritual or offer a sacrifice called *Atang* officiated by a *Baliana* (priestess). Ancient Bikolanos also asked for help to their *Anitos*- the spirits of their kind ancestors. That's why it has been their practice of placing wooden idols and dolls called *landog* placed in their *salangat* (altar). Evil creatures that bring illness and chaos to mankind is also reflected like the beliefs on *Oryol*, *Popo*, *Tambalulos*, *Tandayag na Opon*, *Bakunawa*, and *Yasaw* as well as *Nagined*, *Magkaburak* and *Arapayan*, (the powerful trinity of demons).

The researcher sees that since time immemorial, people always believe that there is a battle between good and evil, destruction and peace, illness and health, in other culture, the Yin and Yang, hot and cold, passive and active energy and they would always seek for someone or something to maintain its balance. Shared meanings regarding all of these had travelled in their culture and had been reflected in their literatures. It travelled from the past and though there might be some variance, still it is alive and tries to survive in the present.

### Theory of Folk Healing

The researcher was able to derive a substantive theory from the collected data after series of analyses.

### *Pag-isi kan Balaog kan Pagbulong* (Understanding the Gift of Folk Healing)

The researcher validated her theory through a questionnaire and an interview with five (5) other folk healers from other municipalities.

### *Pag-apod* (Calling)

This is the first stage wherein a folk healer prepares himself/herself for the healing session by praying and meditating to be able to communicate with God, Mama Mary, Jesus, and The Holy Spirit or to his/her *gabays*.

Four (4) of the five (5) folk healers who were interviewed agree that it is necessary to pray before starting the healing session. One of the five folk healers who answered that he does not agree with the stage of *pag-apod*.

### *Pag-isi* (Knowing)

*Pag-isi* (knowing) is the stage in which folk healers determine the cause of the illness of the patient through *pagpupulso* (pulse taking), *pagritwal* (ritual), and palm reading. Four (4) of the five (5) folk healers agree that patients like the practice of the professional medical practitioner, must be diagnosed.

### *Pag-umay* (Healing)

This is the third stage in which the folk healer will employ the healing modality that will cure the illness of the patient. All of the five folk healers agreed on this stage. The five (5) folk healers perform the same healing modalities with the folk healer informants from Magarao. Four (4) of them also perform *pagsantigwar* (healing illness caused by supernatural being) and *pag-inibang* (healing modality to cure *sibang or usog* caused by unpleasant odor or from a spirit) and three (3) of them perform *paghilot* (bone setting).

### *Pag-arang* (Offering)

This is the fourth stage in which folk healers needs to pray after the healing session to express their gratitude for the success of the healing sessions and ask for more strength (physical and spiritual) to continue their craft. For folk healers who have *gabays* (supernatural being), they take some time to communicate with them and also give thanks. Four (4) of them agree on this stage though the other one says he utters prayers though it is not necessary after every healing sessions.

Folk healers are functional members of the community and this is the reason why despite of the modernization, people still believe in them. The believers only include not just those who can not afford a professional medical practitioner but those who can, like teachers, lawyers, dentists and other professionals.

Results of the interview and answers from the questionnaire reflect that they have also shared meanings with the folk healers from Magarao. The fact that they also perform the same healing modalities and diagnostic process prove that they also have the same experiences and knowledge making it their shared reality.

*Pag-isi kan Balaog kan Pagbulong* (Understanding the Gift of Folk Healing) is about knowing about this existing practice of healing in the Bikol community. The substantive theory of the researcher that tells about about the four (4) stages of folk healing is to make people understand its ways. First, for the younger generation, to make them understand that folk healing as part of our tradition must be recognized. Second, to the Bikolanos who have been swallowed by technology and modernization, to remind them that the practices and traditions of the past brought them to who they are today. Moreover, this is to let them to understand first before mocking or judging. Finally, for the patients, to be able to give them more options for health care however, just like what the well-known folk healer from Camaligan said, people must distinguish a real folk healer from a false one.

Adi (2011) said that people tend to forget that folklore involves things that they love to do with their God-given senses and talents. These are beautiful stories that can inspire young children with pride and help them understand their identity. This is supported by what Gilbas (2015) said that every person should have a better understanding of his cultural heritage, beliefs, customs, and traditions. Furthermore, Amador (2011) said that there is a compelling reason to revisit the past for it is an essential link to the present as well as the future. She said that despite of the modernization, people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century still embrace folk tradition. In addition, this study emphasizes that *pag-isi* or to know is an obligation of every individual to understand why these practices are still alive today and why they should remain alive.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study sought for the shared meanings of the folk healing narratives of Magarao, Camarines Sur. Consequently, it is concluded that for folk healers to perform folk healing, they combine their skills and gift of healing that was endowed to them by the Supreme being. The extracted shared meanings reflect how people who adhere to folk healing view the world; this is

because of their similarities in experiences. Shared meanings which are present in these modern times can be traced back from the practices and beliefs of the ancient Bikolanos reflected in the Bikol literature. Folk healing is indeed a shared reality to the patients and to the folk healers from the ancient Bikolanos to the modern Bikolanos.

Furthermore, this study recommends the folk healers to transform the folk healing practices of the Bikol Region to be centralized by forming an organization to preserve and protect this traditional practice and share the knowledge of folk healing. Moreover, the future researchers must conduct similar studies specifically in the shared meanings and practices in the other aspects of the society. Furthermore, educators are recommended to conduct a study collecting these folk narratives and develop instructional materials appropriate for contextualization. In addition, Bikolano writers, film makers, artists and dancers are recommended to create their interpretations of folk healing and their shared meanings to preserve the rich Bikolano heritage, and these endeavors should be supported by the local government.

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