
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Ethnographic Study on the Psychological Effects of Rituals in the Fishing Communities of Siquijor Island

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| ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study examined the traditional fishing rituals and their psychological influences within the fishing communities in Siquijor Island in the Philippines. It focused on understanding the psycho-social elements of the rituals on the members of the fishing community, their relationships with one another, and cultural perpetuation as well as the role these rituals play in controlling risk and uncertainty surrounding fishing. Using a qualitative research design, data was gathered using key informant interviews and focused group discussion methodologies alongside field work observation. The following key themes emerged: spiritual and psychological connection; cultural importance; community cohesion; psychological impacts behind fishing rituals; intergenerational transmission; and luck and misfortune. These themes demonstrate how the rituals aid in managing emotional and psychological difficulties, impart control and a sense of resilience, strengthen social relationships, and sustain cultural practices. These themes illustrate that traditional fishing rituals are vital for enhancing psychological well-being and providing emotional support, reinforcing community relationships, and helping fishers deal with the unpredictable nature of their work. It is recommended that a focus on future research including long-term studies on tangible psychosocial impact, preservation and transmission of these rituals through digital archiving, and conducting similar research in other Southeast Asian fishing communities, can provide greater insight into the significance of rituals in alleviating work-related stress and fostering cultural continuity.

| KEYWORDS

Fishing rituals; indigenous psychology; Sikolohiyang Pilipino; social psychology

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Fisheries are the lifeblood of coastal economies and cultural identity, especially in the Philippines where small-scale fishing is still a lifeline for many communities. However, fishing as a means of livelihood is a risky occupation – the extremes of weather, varying catch sizes and inherent risks at sea make it fraught with uncertainty. In the context of these challenges, fishing-related traditions like rituals are important for coping with mental stress among fishers. This paper delves into the *Patlaw* ritual in Siquijor, examining its cultural and psychological importance for fishers in dealing with the precariousness of their occupation. Although there is abundant literature on the cultural dimensions of these rituals, especially their social functions, less has been written about their psychological benefits, specifically those related to stress management and emotional resilience.

This paper investigates fishing rituals and their application in assisting fishers to overcome work-related stress and anxiety. The mental, psychological and emotional benefits connected to these phenomena are the focal point of this study and fill a gap in existing literature. Although the importance of fishing ceremonies in communities throughout the Philippines has been noted,

their potential benefit as sources of psychological resilience remains understudied. This study is therefore highly germane, in light of the dearth of literature on the psychological effects of fishing rituals. Although the social and cultural functions of rituals are well described, little is known about their psychological effects in terms of managing stress or emotions and fostering resilience in risky occupations. As fishing communities confront challenges, from climate change to modernization that brings in not only cash but also disruption, understanding how ritual can help manage uncertainty and build social solidarity is important. This research seeks to add to the emerging body of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* that integrates the indigenous practices into psychological theories by examining how such indigenous practices foster resiliency.

Cultural anthropology has traditionally studied the cultural meaning of fishing rituals in its social and spiritual dimension. Acheson (1981) observed that fishing rituals, such as those for protection and luck, also constitute social adjustments to the risks inherent in fishing. Zhao (2017) analyzed the development process of China's Sea Sacrifice Festival and points out a traditional festival, which was once possessed and conducted only by fishers to the largest public spectacle today. Recent ethnographic studies, such as that of Wekke et al. (2018), have explored how traditional fishing practices, such as the Sasi marine rituals in Indonesia, respond to changes in the social environment. In the context of Siquijor, Torreon & Tiempo (2021) underscored the way fishing rituals still inform a sense of community and cultural identity. Despite providing a strong understanding of cultural and social aspects of fishing ceremonies, these studies have been scant on the psychological effects of rituals. This paper aims to address this gap and discusses how the fishing rituals, like the *Patlaw*, foster emotional regulation, psychological resilience and community bonding among the fishers in Siquijor, Philippines.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to answer the following key research questions:

1. What is the historical groundwork and sociocultural background of the fishing rituals practiced in Siquijor Island fishing communities?
2. What specific unique Siquijor Island fishing rituals do fishers have and how do these rituals impact their psychosocial health?
3. How do these rituals promote the preservation of local knowledge systems, culture, and community resilience in Siquijor Island?
4. What perceived psychological motivations of these rituals could serve practical uses, future directions or community actions potentially develop?
5. How are fishing rituals transmitted through the generations in the fishing communities of Siquijor Island?

1.2. Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Discover the role of rituals in enabling fishers to cope with stress and balance their emotions.
2. Explore the collective functions of rituals, particularly in how they promote social integration and community building.
3. Analyze how rituals help people hold onto their culture from being lost in a rush toward modernization?
4. Discuss the problems that rituals encounter in the ever-changing world today, and how they can be modified to stay relevant.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

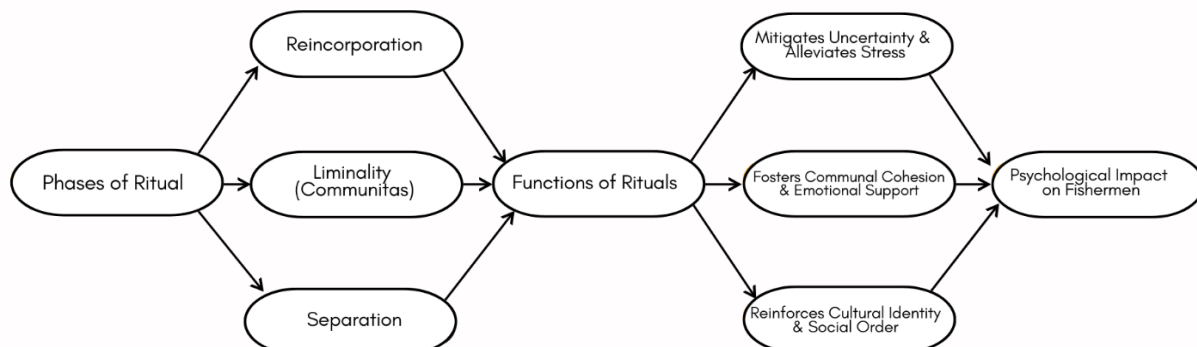


Figure 1. Victor Turner's Ritual Process Theory and the Fishing Rituals

The study is anchored on Victor Turner's Ritual Process Theory and combines socio-anthropological and psychological perspectives of rituals (Turner, 1967). The Turnerian model deals with the stability and change of rites within social and personal crises (Kapferer, 2019). Expanding Van Gennep's (1909) taxonomy of rites of passage, Turner (1967) formulated a three-stage ritual structure, through which individuals are transformed from one state to another. There is a liminal stage in rituals where participants "no longer" accepted by society receive new names to connote their "not yet" status (Turner, 1967, as cited in Beidelman, 1968).

Rituals perform essential social and psychological functions, most particularly in uncertain futures (Turner, 1967). The liminal phase promotes transformation and togetherness or *communitas* (Kapferer, 2019). Fishing rituals fulfill pragmatic and psychological needs, helping the fishers to adapt to environmental variability and fostering social cohesion. They mitigate uncertainty and alleviate stress, foster communal cohesion and emotional support, and reinforce cultural identity and social order. Hence, Turner (1967) draws attention to the role played by rituals in the upholding of cultural integrity and social stability, demonstrating how fishing-themed ritual sequences deal with environmental pressures and strengthen community cohesion.

1.4. Literature Review

Existing literature about fishing rituals focuses essentially on the cultural dimension and centrality for community development. Yet there is a noticeable lack of attention paid to the psychological effects of fishers in the fishing communities. Several anthropological studies, such as Acheson (1981) and Pollnac & Poggie (2008), have well described the importance of fishing rituals in building social cohesion among fishers and promoting social solidarity within community. These are not merely symbolic traditions: they form a critical part of how trust, cooperation and the communal belonging of fishers are fostered within fishing communities. Inspired by Durkheim's (1915) influential theorizing on collective effervescence, these studies argue that the shared experience of communal rituals reinforces social identity among participants. In the fishing communities of Siquijor in particular, the *Patlaw* ritual serves as a bond that further connects fishers and binds them through this transcendent cultural praxis.

However, the literature on the psychological functions of these rituals continues to be relatively scarce. In finding that rituals could be effective because when conducted in high stakes contexts – for example in elite sports – they function to provide a protective buffer against psychological stress by inducing feelings of control (Damisch & Mussweiler, 2010). Turner's (1969) Ritual Process Theory emphasizes that rituals provide participants with a distinct liminal space which serves to take them beyond the day-to-day strains and demands of ordinary life, bringing about emotions regulation and enlivening new or renewed states of stability. Although participants can apply these conjectural paradigms to fishing rituals, and particularly in relation to the potential of such rituals as aids for stress management, there are surprisingly few studies that actually home in on the mental resilience that fishing rituals bestow, and within this like-no-other world of those who fish.

In addition, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino psychology), which proposes the study of psychological concepts in the context of Philippine culture, points to the need for recognition that Filipino practices and values, e.g., *kapwa* (shared identity) and *bayanihan* (community spirit), are integral in determining recognized traits of well-being. Thus, while *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* has brought to light important insights into the Filipino psychology, it is an avenue that is as yet underinvestigated, most especially when examining how native Philippine rituals, such as those in Siquijor, heal and build communities. This study seeks to fill this significant gap in the literature by elucidating how these rituals serve as effective psychological coping strategies, which may also provide a culturally sensitive lens for understanding resilience among such populations.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

This research adopted a qualitative ethnographic approach (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2017; Fetterman, 2020) in investigating the psychological as well as socio-cultural life of local fishers in Siquijor Island. The use of ethnography results in a deep understanding of participants' experience surrounding cultural values and traditions. The research also includes Greene's (2000) performance ethnography, which concentrates on rituals such as the *Patlaw* offering ceremony that articulate signs of common identity and psychological processes (Pelias, 2015; Denzin, 2003).

2.2. Participants

The research employed purposive sampling to select key informants from Siquijor fishing rituals: experienced and young fishers,

religious leaders, local government officials, women and children, as well as a non-believing fisher. All were engaged in fishing and familiar with the *Patlaw* ritual. Those not involved in fishing or the rituals were excluded.

2.3. Data Collection

This study was conducted for 3 months in the fishing villages of Siquijor Island, employing different data collection techniques. The *Patlaw* rituals were recorded and notes on physical descriptions, emotions, and social interactions were also taken during participant observation. These were in addition to key informant interviews (KII) and a focus group discussion (FGD). A semi-structured interview guide was used to maintain consistency and yet support an exploration of emerging themes around participants' engagement with the *Patlaw*, its psychological impact on them, and its contribution to community solidarity through cultural preservation. All interviews and FGD were audio-recorded with permission from participants and the conversations were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

2.4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a qualitative framework used in analyzing data to discern repeating patterns (Terry et al., 2017; Braun et al., 2015), was applied. Transcripts were generated in several steps: interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim, followed by back-listening to audio recordings for accuracy. Initial coding included the analysis of transcripts to identify themes that were relevant to the research questions. Segments discussing particular elements of fishing rituals were coded. Other codes were combined into larger categories, such as Spiritual and Psychological Connection and Cultural Importance of the Rituals. Data triangulation was employed to improve the validity of the research by comparing and contrasting responses from interviews, focus group discussion, and participant observation in order to arrive at a well-rounded perception from the fishing community's viewpoint.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The study complied with ethical standards to safeguard the welfare, privacy and dignity of key informants. All participants gave informed consent, and they were informed about the purpose of this research and the possibility of withdrawing at any time without consequences. Informed consent was obtained before interviews and focus group discussions. Anonymity was preserved, ensuring that transcripts and all recorded data were de-identified using pseudonyms. The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) approved the study. Cultural sensitivity was addressed, with attention paid to local customs and traditions throughout the study.

3. Results

The researcher highlighted how important *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* vis-à-vis the psychological dimensions of fishing activities, particularly with giving attention to a local fishing ritual such as *Patlaw*. It is grounded on the Philippine core values of *loob* (inner self), *kapwa* (shared identity), and *bayanihan* (communal unity) and has implications in emotional regulation, cultural preservation, and community cohesion. Six main themes emerged: spiritual and psychological connection; cultural importance; community cohesion; psychosocial impacts of fishing rituals; inter-generational transmission; and luck and misfortune.

3.1. History and Sociocultural Context of Fishing Ceremonies in Siquijor Island Communities

Table 1. The History and Sociocultural Context of Fishing Ceremonies in Siquijor Island Communities

Main Theme	Codes
Spiritual and Psychological Connection	Psychological benefits of rituals
	Coping mechanisms and the use of rituals as forms of psychological reassurance
	The impact of religion and beliefs on rituals
	The integration of traditional practices with contemporary challenges

In the Island of Siquijor, time-honored rituals provide a fascinating look at those that have survived uninterrupted for centuries

and sweeping patterns of colonization heavily influenced by Catholic Church. More dynamically, the rich and complex lore of the island's fishing community is one that offers a distinctive insight into, on the one hand, a deep and multifaceted engagement with the oceanic realm and natural environment, and, on another yet more subtle level, into what one might briefly calls an ethereal world of spiritual imaginings. These fishing ceremonies and rituals were not simply acts of survival, but offerings, made to the sea itself and the gods who controlled it, for they believed that only through them did the fish come in such abundance. The objective of these practices was to guarantee a rich catch of fish and, at the same time, to live in delicate equilibrium with human existence and the vast web of nature.

Christianity was introduced to Spain in the 16th century. As with many cultural idiosyncrasies of Filipinos, the Siquijor fishing rituals underwent a kind of reformation where Catholic practices were incorporated with older animistic rituals. Old ritualistic practices are now blended with the Christian ideas personified in the *Patlaw*. This indigenous syncretism of Roman Catholicism and traditional religious practices is especially noticeable during the reverence of Holy Week. The offering of animals, prayer and symbolic articles including "puso" (hanging rice), "tuba" (coconut wine), tobacco, eggs and "tilad" (betel nut, betel leaves and lime) play a significant part in the *Patlaw* ritual.

The *Patlaw* ritual is an expression of sharing between humans and spirits of the sea, and more importantly, a social event that consolidates community relationships among islanders. Throughout the duration of the *Patlaw*, ceremonies are held where a pig and a chicken is slaughtered with the vital parts donated to the sea in hopes that they will bring protection and bounty for good fishing throughout the year. This religious ritual normally takes place during Holy Week, exactly a week before the start of *bubu* (fish trap) fishing on Black Saturday. This ritual is largely unaltered until the Spanish colonizers brought in Christianity, which then merged with the *Patlaw* and produced a truly artistic weave of Catholic-lingered prayers and animistic practice that one sees today as the tradition called *Patlaw*.

One of the key contributions to be gleaned from an analysis of these rituals is that they are central in creating a spiritual and psychological link between the fishers of Siquijor. The rituals strike a chord with *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, especially the concept of *loob* (inner self), where this ritual maintains balance in order to bring emotional well-being and remind fishers to be in tune with the spirits of the sea. The participants described how getting involved in the *Patlaw*, before and after they go out to fish, gave them emotional security as well as assistance in dealing with worries and anxieties that arise from the unpredictable nature of fishing. This phenomenon is strongly commensurate with *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*'s tenets of *pananampalataya* (faith) and *pag-asa* (hope), which serve to enrich spiritual and psychological facets in the context of an unstable marine environment.

As one fisher explained, "We feel more secure when we do the ritual before going out to sea. It's like we got the spirits watching over us." Another fisher provided a touching insight of the *Patlaw* as with deep psychological meaning, strengthening the fishers' spiritual connection to the sea: "It's different if you haven't done it. You feel bad, but when you do it, everything feels calm." Such accounts serve as poignant depictions of the way the ritual serves as psychological anchor, a central idea within *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, that allows fishers to attain and sustain emotional sobriety in the face of constant cajoling and demands engendered by their laborious job.

3.2. The Distinct Fishing Ritual Customs and their Psychosocial Impacts in Siquijor Island

Table 2. The Distinct Fishing Ritual Customs and their Psychosocial Impacts in Siquijor Island

Main Theme	Codes
Cultural Importance of the Rituals	Cultural and spiritual heritage
	Rituals as a form of cultural continuity
	Religious influence of Catholicism
	Cultural significance through time
	Purpose of offerings

The most recurring theme that came out of the interviews had to do with the cultural importance conjured through ritual. In the vibrant fishing villages of Siquijor, *Patlaw* is very special because it is a colorful representation of the complex relationships among nature and culture, society and religion. Before setting off on a fishing expedition, the fishers ritually offer pigs and chickens, betel nut and eggs, hanging rice and tobacco to the spirits of dead fishers and the custodians of the vast ocean in order to mollify them. In return for these sacrifices, the fishers sincerely hope to gain protection and luck while fishing on the waters.

"For the *Patlaw*, it's really about continuing to practice this historical tradition for fishermen who go out and find other historic evidence of the ritual, even if they don't know really where they come from," one fisher explained. He continued, "We offer a male and female chicken, along with 'tilad' (betel nut, betel leaves and lime), chocolate, 'bibingka' (rice cake), tobacco, 'tuba' (coconut wine), as well as other significant gifts to the spirit of the ocean." This fabulous offer is to appease the spirits of the deep and the souls of the departed fishers and whose benignity and blessings they covet for abundance and greater fish hauls. He underscored the sociocultural importance of this ritual, for it continues to help fishers cope with the problem of modernity and maintain their unique self-identity and cultural heritage.

A local Church leader explained the ritual practices: "Believers of rituals practice them; they may be somewhat mistaken, but no religious group can stop them." He added, "The Catholic Church respects all their rites. The Church allows them do it and encourages them always to fish with their gear blessed in the church." On the other hand, a local government unit official narrated that fishing rituals are actually indispensable in the lives of fishers. "It's still going on now because it is about our tradition, as we follow what our old fishers practiced and they were the people who knew how these things worked or they had faith that something could work, like for better fishing results," he said.

In stark contrast to this is a fisher's assumption that the ritual does not really have any religious connotations. Nevertheless, as an agnostic, a non-believer fisher still has deep respect for its cultural relevance in the fishing world. He said, "It expresses the culture of our fishers. It is still followed today because it has been passed on over the centuries." One younger fisher expressed: "In fishing, anywhere you go is with an offering." He emphasized the deep-seated cultural aspects embodied within fishing today as it passes through modernity and changing social values. "To be sure, we also communicate with the spirits of our forefathers who have gone before us. They are invited to ride with us on the high seas, into shallow waters and over rugged cliffs with us."

3.3. The Local Knowledge Systems, Cultural Preservation, and Community Resilience through the Fishing Rituals in Siquijor Island

Table 3. The Local Knowledge Systems, Cultural Preservation, and Community Resilience through the Fishing Rituals in Siquijor Island

Main Theme	Codes
Community Cohesion	Social identity and cultural cohesion
	Cultural practices across generations
	Social solidarity and support
	Community resilience and cultural preservation

Patlaw is central and important to the sustainability of cultural traditions as well as complex indigenous knowledge systems, which have been trans-generational. All these features that are conducive to community also strengthen the *kapwa* (shared identity) aspect of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, based on the paradigm of shared self among the fishing community. The ceremony, fishers have explained, reinforces an unusual form of bonding and creates a powerful sense of camaraderie that can provide crucial assistance in coping with the emotional stresses and strains of fishing. This ceremony strengthens not only the social ties of the community that bind them together, but it also etches in deep relief and with richness of their common cultural identity and heritage. As one participant astutely noted, "It's not about fishing; it's about the company. We share the prayers, and we share the food. It brings us closer." This view expresses the basic principles of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, wherein a communalistic mode is favored in dealing with emotional and social support, where taking care of the group prevails over individual needs.

From the cultural preservation perspective, these rituals are an important way of perpetuating handed-down knowledge, which is invaluable to the community's identity in cultural as well as social terms. On a larger scale, the fishers of Siquijor related vivid memories on how *Patlaw* was customarily taught from the older to the younger generations. This guarantees not only its continuity as a traditional fishing technique but also shows clearly that through indigenous practices, many are still able to maintain and hand down cultural systems which are deeply interwoven within these customs. But the study also revealed a disturbing dip in active involvement among young people, raising concerns for the future sustainability of these cherished practices. "Younger folks might be here, but mostly they're not actively fishing like in years past," said one elder, evidence of the modern shift in culture and societal dynamics with its embedded influence. This insight echoes the diverse issues that *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* identifies when it grapples with modernity and globalization: how cultural traditions, imbedded in the very foundation of Filipino identity, faces up against changing norms and values.

For a Roman Catholic priest, he narrated with clarity and purpose how the annual observance of the fluvial procession of Santo Niño has become such a powerful medium in furthering social integration and reinforcing cultural identity of the people. He expressed that this is all capitalized upon to grow a stronger sense of unity in the community, adding: "It's something for the community, everyone gathered, everybody having a common goal." More than just a religious event, the fluvial procession is considered one of the year's most important social and religious engagements wherein the whole community gathers to rejoice and share in all their blessings. In addition, a local government official emphasized the importance of customs in promoting social integration among the fishing society. "It's not all the time when they're fortunate catching fish, but while fishing at their own spots, if they find someone else hasn't had a catch, immediately they put some (fish) in their share." With the reciprocity of this kind, no one is left without benefitting, thus reinforcing community support structure, and keeping connected to each other irrespective whether they personally have faced any success or down time in fishing.

3.4. The Practical Applications, Future Directions, and Community Initiatives on the Psychosocial Effects of Fishing Rituals

Table 4. Practical Applications, Future Directions, and Community Initiatives on the Psychosocial Effects of Fishing Rituals

Main Theme	Codes
Psychological Impacts Behind Fishing Rituals	Psychological comfort and protection Coping with stress and risk Spiritual and psychological duality The pragmatic view on psychological effects

Patlaw fulfils a strong psychosocial role beyond mere customary ritual. "It's like a part of you is missing. But when you've done it, you'll have peace of mind," shared by one participant. Equally, another key informant passionately emphasized the critical role of *Patlaw*, "It provides peace. If we didn't do the *Patlaw* yet, there's a big difference," he said, highlighting the absence of this ritual's effect on their state of mind. The psychological benefits of this ritual can be used considering that fishers face daily stress and anxiety, which would indeed help in mitigating risks. Another fisher also explained the importance of *Patlaw* and specifically pointed out its psychological merits. It shows that belief and emotional security in their experiences is so closely entwined, when subjected to the dangers lurking in the deep.

From a spiritual perspective, one participant stated that rituals help to affirm the psychological well-being of fishers as they face nature's trials at sea. Citing an exorcist priest, "If not for God, they would not have been saved, and he structures their safety and success in their dangerous missions along the very core idea of the concept of salvation." On the other hand, another participant recognized that these rituals perform not only as spiritual practices but more importantly psyching up for the fishers to go fishing. "They get a good catch of fish and can speak about having landed a lot," he identified the practice with the confidence that it will have at least some successful fishing expeditions.

In contrast with the above personal experiences, one non-participant suggests an alternative psychological explanation for these rituals. "It's skill that counts," he said sternly, making it clear that the success at fishing has nothing to do with spiritual beliefs but everything to do with hard work and refined skills.

3.5. The Intergenerational Transmission of Rituals in Siquijor's Fishing Communities

Table 5. The Intergenerational Transmission of Rituals in Siquijor's Fishing Communities

Main Theme	Codes
Intergenerational Transmission	Preserving traditions amidst modernization The role of elders in teaching rituals Shifting elevations of the culture within the youth Plans for making the youth active participants

The intergenerational passage of fishing rituals not only allows this cherished tradition to survive amid swells of modernization but also serves as a reminder and symbol of the cultural importance embedded in these rituals. *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* highlights the central roles played by relationships and community connections in transmitting core values and traditional beliefs across generations. In Siquijor's fishing communities, it is the elders who stand in a role of honor as cultural teachers, carefully instilling into the younger generation their rich knowledge of ritual and its meaning. Even though in some cases there is noticeable lack of

interest among the younger generation of fishers, with regard to these traditions, this research strikingly confirms that several elders to date continue their commitment for transmitting teachings and incentives aimed at involving young generations, thus ensuring sustainability. This narrative is an embodiment of the fundamental principle of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, which underscores the significance of family and community in keeping cultural legacy alive, especially amid external threats brought about by pervasive imperatives like modernization and demands for environmental adaptation.

The maintenance and transfer of the *Patlaw* is, in fact, a major concern for many members of the community. One elder fisher, on apt reflection of declining youth interest in culture, pointed to the issue by saying that "But you can't really force them," emphasizing his position on the need to acknowledge young people's agency and choices. A second informant expressed his misgivings with regard to the *Patlaw* rites as follows, "It depends on who believes in it," underscoring in this statement that many of the younger generation from his community were not interested anymore in these traditional performances. He was frustrated by what he saw as a noticeable absence of active participation though, "they will only do it if they feel like doing it." In his regretful reflection, he said: "I do only have the bitter truth that less and less young people are interested to keep this tradition as part of our heritage."

It is also, as one participant notes, interesting to think that the *Patlaw* ritual is more attractive to the elders than it is to the young ones. Even so, "There are children on board the boat and they've already tried performing the rituals," he said, a reflection of sociocultural change that in some way modulate modernity and the redefined priorities of younger generation as seen from a noticeable drop in ritual participation. Despite this shift, he made it very clear that he's not ready to give the customs up to the younger generation, saying firmly "I taught them how to do it." On a spiritual level, another participant was lamenting the older and younger members of the community now having a larger gap in caring. "But the fact is that the young generation does not prefer that kind of practice," he said candidly. Despite the older generation's efforts to encourage active participation, however, the younger one is only "more interested in having fun, not necessarily in fishing," he lamented. Still, a Catholic priest said, "From the Encyclical of Pope Francis, the *Laudato Si*, it's a renewal of the old form, trying to change and adapt into the new generation where the church can somehow enter in the life of young people." In the midst of all these struggles, he pleaded with both the Church and the elders that they never grow weary but keep on doing whatever it takes to mentor younger people into this tradition, lest it go down in oblivion due to the passing of time.

In the focus group discussion, one elder commented on the stories that were told by the key informants, explaining the passing down of historical narratives related to fishing culture with particular emphasis on how children were socialized by elders through introducing them to different activities during fishing trips. "I always remind the younger folks to preserve the tradition well as they are the ones who will inherit and continue with it and have to be taught just as I was taught by my elders," after stating for several times that he must take care of this rich expression of cultural heritage.

3.6. Other Findings: Luck and Misfortune

Table 6. Other Findings: Luck and Misfortune

Main Theme	Codes
Luck and Misfortune	Belief in participation rites alongside good fortune Fishing conflict between good and bad fortune Pragmatic views on luck Cultural significance of luck

Patlaw is intricately connected with the construct of *swerte* (luck) and *malas* (misfortune) in this Filipino psychology. Fishers explain their perceived success or failure in all of the variety of their activities in the fisheries sector. This pervading belief system demonstrates a reflection of the general Filipino mindset, whether they are spirits or some kind for external entity which holds sway on whether one is lucky or unlucky. Fishers point out that they have noticed a significant improvement in their fishing catch as a result of this ritual, and this increased success has served to further reconfirm their shared belief in the effectiveness of such rituals. As one fisher described it, "If you don't do the ritual, then you will not catch anything. It is as though the spirits are angry, and we would not wish to anger them." This dichotomy between luck and misfortune serves to highlight that *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* effectively links Filipino cultural practices with more general psychological functioning, the result of which is practitioners gaining a sense of control over factors in fishing that are spontaneous and uncontrollable.

One of the more senior fishermen, explicitly admitted to the strong connection between performing ritual and success in fishing. He described his philosophy by saying, "When you get a lot of fish, you're lucky. And then there are times when you don't catch

anything, and it's just really too bad." He also explained: "If you don't perform the offering, nothing will be caught." He continued, "Now the important thing is when you reprimand these little fishers, just make sure you don't hurt them because if they feel it, then that will bring nothing but bad luck".

Other fishers also reflected this exchange: "Yes, if you're going to get in a fight, something's got to go wrong." When asked to expand his statement on fishing luck, the informant agreed that "The type of ritual regarding fishing were mainly controlling and causing luck." "As well, splashing water onto the boat, showing disrespect or being careless and saying curse words and scolding other fishers on board will also call misfortune," he explained. In contrast, one of the non-believers possesses a much more down-to-earth conception of luck and misfortune in fishing. This one argues that being able to fish well is more the sign of a talented amateur than something that would come through magic. "All your luck and all your bad luck, they are all in yourself," he said decidedly.

4. Discussion

The fishing ceremonies performed by the communities that inhabit Siquijor Island are so deeply interwoven with the fishing lifestyle and worldview of fishers. They served as powerful tools by which fishers have sought to live in the world with greater control or predictability. The importance of these rituals is not restricted to cultural meaning. They are also central in encouraging community bonding, psychological adaptability and the perpetuation of culture for future generations. This research highlights six major themes defining the psychological effects of rituals: spiritual and psychological connection, cultural importance, community cohesion, psychological impacts behind fishing rituals, intergenerational transmission, and luck and misfortune. All of these themes emphasize the complex interplay between religion, culture, and psychological well-being among Siquijor fishing communities.

The fishing traditions of Siquijor Island result in a deeply meaningful spiritual and psychological bond between the fishers. This is much more than a ritual. It is emotionally reassuring and comforting. Following Turner's Ritual Process Theory, the *Patlaw* ritual is a liminal process which provides an agential transmitter for participant change that mediates between their departure from the profane world and entry into the sacred sphere, allowing them to come to terms with existential dilemmas about the unpredictability of each fishing season. Through the flow of this ritual, fishers ritually strip down their daily identities to enter into a liminal realm in which they speak together as one voice with shared fears, hopes and desires as they appeal to spiritual forces for help.

These rituals offer the participants a means to address stressors inherent in fishing. The performance of sacrifices, together with earnest prayers to the spirits of the sea and the souls of the departed fishers, is an effective way to create a psychological defense against such stresses and offer some measure of comfort and control. The idea that the success of the fishing season is dependent on these rituals lifts the weight from one's shoulders providing fishers with emotional strength to face down obstacles. This psychological defense mechanism is critical, as it provides insulation for fishermen from negative aspects of their labor as well as contributes to the shaping of cultural and religious identities (Pollnac & Poggie, 2008).

From a *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* perspective, it is important to understand how Filipino indigenous psychology highlights the categories of *kapwa* (shared identity) and *loob* (inner self) as central constructs that shape the complex relationship between humans and nature. These psychological constructs represent the core belief of fishers in Siquijor Island that they are not independent from nature but, instead, are deeply connected with it. As a result, the *Patlaw* ritual is not just about pacifying sea spirits but also about strengthening group solidarity between people, their ecosystem and God (Enriquez, 1986). This in-depth spiritual and psychological connection is central to a holistic understanding of the deeper psychological processes at play in Siquijor fishing communities.

The traditional way of fishing in the island of Siquijor far exceeds the reach of the line and depth of the nets but it has been one that intertwines with their culture. These rituals serve as an important tool for the maintenance of the islander's cultural identity, and at the same time also are a reminder of their deep ties to the sea. For example, *Patlaw* goes beyond being a mere offering to the sea spirits. It is also a solidification of the community's belief system where fishers feel that they are embedded in nature's cycles. This interconnectedness is also reflected in the Filipino indigenous psychological constructs of *kapwa* and *loob*, which suggest that humans are not separate from nature, but are part of a collective relationship with it.

Considered an indispensable aspect of their cultural legacy, such rituals are precisely handed down from generation to generation, deepening the lessons and morals of respect, modesty and mutual reliance in the cultural memory of fishers. The importance of these practices is grounded in the Siquijorian perception of the environment's natural and spiritual dimensions. These ceremonies

are central to the way the local community lives, as well as their fishing practices that run parallel with their deep-seated cultural beliefs and long-held traditions amid increasing modernity. Preserving such traditions are important for maintaining the connection to their ancestors and strengthening the psychological feeling of belonging that is integral to their communal culture (Acheson, 1981).

The indigenous rituals' preservation is more than just keeping archaic practices. It is also about the necessity to keep a collective spirit. This is especially important in an increasingly modernizing world where cultural degradation looms large as a reality. The rituals, as vehicles of cultural persistence, offer the basic background relating to which fishers use them in order not to lose their *loob* and *kapwa*, and thus protect aspects of well-being. The fishing practices in Siquijor are also significant as a way of community building. Taking part in these performances creates a strong feeling of community identity and collective support of the fishermen. As Durkheim (1915) also highlighted, group rituals play a role in the ritualistic preservation of social solidarity and reinforcement of common values, a fact that is vividly observable among Siquijor fishers. The *Patlaw* ritual, in which fishers gather to offer sacrifices and prayers, is a bonding experience for the fishers. This collective involvement contributes to a sense of *communitas*, a concept developed by Turner (1967) to describe shared experiences which bring about equality and solidarity.

The collective sense of purpose and aid helps to improve the psychological health of people in this sort of community. By participating in these rituals, fishers are not only seeking divine help for their catch but also cementing the camaraderie between them as a community. The rituals are a form of social capital assisting members of the community, especially in time of doubt and anxiety. This sense of unity is a key element in maintaining the resilience of the community (Brooks et al., 2016), as it generates a common belief that they share both joys and sorrows in their fishing life.

Fish yields have heavy psychological effect on participants. Rituals serve as a mental support system, bringing about emotional regulation and coping strategies to mitigate the stress of fishers. As highlighted in the works of Reddy (2020) and Najamuddin et al. (2020), fishers often carry through with pre-departure practices in order to control and achieve emotional reassurance prior to setting sail for their work at sea. In Siquijor, the *Patlaw* ritual serves precisely this function: it provides fishers with a psychological release valve to ventilate their deep-rooted fears and hopes in a spiritually grounding way.

Moreover, the idea that *Patlaw* can have an effect on whether the catch is lucrative or lackluster fosters a feeling of psychological control over all the external variables in fishing. Attribution of fishing results to rituals is a means by which it becomes possible for fishers to rationalize the intrinsic unpredictability of their work. This psychological tendency helps them to confront the uncertainties of fishing, helping them stay emotionally calm and strong. Mental, physical and emotional support of these rituals is critical as it becomes a psychological tether during the challenges of their occupation (Reddy, 2020).

Understanding the psychological effects of rituals highlights culture-specific emotional coping strategies particular to the Filipino setting. Through these rituals, the fishers of Siquijor are not only attending to their present emotional state but also building and maintaining their cultural identity, a key component to their psychological buffer. The rituals represent a culturally sanctioned way of coping with the confounding uncertainties that are inherent in their livelihood (Enriquez, 1986).

Furthermore, fishing rituals being handed down from generation to generation is indispensable. Among the fishers of Siquijor, the elders serve as cultural teachers to teach younger fishers how to fish and its rituals. This generational inheritance has led to those rites being part of the modern community's cultural identity, overcoming an ever-increasing influence, especially among younger people, of new technologies and global trends.

Passing on the knowledge to the younger generation helps in preserving a strong cultural heritage. The younger generation of fishers still perform the *Patlaw* ritual even while modernity has advanced and belief levels may not be homogenous. This modified observance of the ritual by younger generation may be largely due to habit or obedience to tradition, but it also demonstrates that these rituals continue to play a significant role in defining community identity. Generational discussion is important to help the rituals continue to be meaningful and relevant and appeals for deeper connection with a rich history of community traditions (Palmer, 1989).

From a *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* perspective, this is the very process of passing down cultural practices from one generation to another that represent an important segment of the community's total psyche. It also ensures that the values, beliefs and coping strategies inherent in these rituals are not lost through time and their teaching is actively recouped from younger generations. This sequence of cultural diffusion serves to link the past and present, maintaining traditional value in facing modern issues (Najamuddin et al., 2020).

The ideas of *swerte* (luck) and *malas* (misfortune) were deeply embedded in fishing superstitions and practice in Siquijor. Fishers commonly note that the effectiveness of their catch in one way or another depends upon how potent the rituals are that are done before they go out to sea. For the *Patlaw* ritual, offerings are given to the sea spirits in exchange for a good fishing season. The successful or failed fishing trip is taken as a sign that the rituals were or weren't properly and timely conducted: for some fishing traditions, it's even interpreted as lack of respect to the spirits of the sea.

This belief in luck and misfortune is an essential part of how fishers deal with the uncertainties of their work. It is a mental structure that they can use to understand and deal with the unpredictability of fishing. By interpreting success or failure in their catch in terms of divine approval or disapproval, fishers are able to protect their sense of self-determination and mastery in an otherwise unpredictable livelihood. This thinking packs the community together, collectively having to shoulder successes and failures together, which lead to a culture of responsibility and support (Cabali & Cuevas, 2016).

As used within the framework of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, beliefs about luck and misfortune exemplify the Filipino concept of fate and personal responsibility. These beliefs provide a psychological cushion to cope with the inherent uncertainty within the fishing industry, a system of emotion management that helps fishers remain in control of their occupation when there is so much unpredictability (Enriquez, 1986).

Conclusion

This study examined fishing rituals conducted by local fishers in Siquijor Island and describes in detail their strong psychological effects on the mental well-being and resilience of fishers. The work was meticulously crafted with the objective to gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychological interpretation of these practices, especially on how certain rituals, particularly the *Patlaw*, play an important role in helping fishers in emotional regulation and stress management. These daunting challenges however, are compounded by an array of socio-economic and environmental uncertainties and risks that characterize their entrenchment in livelihoods.

The results of this study found that fishing rituals, embedded in the very weave of the social fabric and spiritual identity of cultures, serves a dual and critical purpose: to secure a rich fish catch through their offerings and serve as effective strategies for dealing with stress at an advanced psychological level. According to the fishers, participation in these rituals gave them a feeling of peace and mental preparation while going to sea during periods of uncertainty and risks. On the contrary, by eliminating these rituals, feelings of stress were higher and a sense of bad luck in relation to work outcomes was intensified, leading fishers to feel more stressed and anxious in relation to failure. This finding emphasizes the key and nonredundant function of rituals in cultivating psychological resilience, i.e., offering a source of comfort in situations of uncertainty and stress.

In the established theoretical context, the paper resonates well with Turner's (1967) Ritual Process Theory and Durkheim's (1915) notion of social solidarity. In Turner's model, rituals provide psychological comfort by generating the so-called "liminal" spaces — mental breaks that open up a new possible avenue for participants to reassert control amid confusion. In particular, the *Patlaw* ritual seems to be an important psychological tool which helps reduce stress and anxiety levels by providing fishers with a much-needed repose before they face the adversities of the open waters. Moreover, since their rituals are inherently communal in nature, they also have the effect of strengthening social relationships and promoting a deep sense of togetherness. The powerful idea proposed by Durkheim that rituals can be anything that brings about social solidarity and cohesion is quite evident in the *Patlaw* ritual, as collective participation strengthens personal resilience and simultaneously creates an opportunity for sharing a sense of communal mental health.

Furthermore, the research based on communal rituals as a psychological need is significantly expanded, contributing to the resilience of the self and community. These rituals serve as strategies for cultural continuity and heritage but also offer coping mechanisms that support emotional strength and networking in fishing communities. Using Filipino psychology principles of integration, these rituals can be described as psychological methods that enable fishers to cope with stress, control their emotions and hurdle the unpredictability of their livelihood.

Although this study provided valuable information on the psychological consequences of fishing rituals, it had several limitations, such as a limited sample size and reliance on self-report measures that necessarily reduce the generalizability of its findings. A larger sample, represented by quantitative data are necessary to have a more detailed view of the various opinions of the fishing community. Also, longitudinal or comparative studies could provide invaluable insight regarding the implications of this study by rigorous analysis on long-term impacts of these rituals on mental health and resilience for a deeper comprehension of their functions in the lives of fishers participating in such a challenging occupation.

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