



EXPERIENCES ON THE UTILIZATION OF TRADITIONAL, COMPLEMENTARY, AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (TCAM) FOR HYPERTENSION MANAGEMENT: BASES FOR INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The current study explored the lived experiences of people using Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) in the treatment of hypertension and applied the concepts into science education. This qualitative phenomenological research design adopted in-depth interviews to obtain information from the participants. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data. Results showed that users highly favor herbal remedies such as garlic, ginger, and lemongrass based on ease of access, cultural appropriateness, and perceived efficacy in managing blood pressure. Despite its efficacy, there were still obstacles in the form of difficulty in preparation and dosing as well as little information being available from science regarding the use of these remedies. Given the results, the study proposed, "Bridging Science and Tradition: A Training and Herbal Garden Intervention Program on TCAM for Hypertension Management" to foster the incorporation of culturally appropriate health practices into science education and to advance scientific knowledge and health awareness.

Keywords: *Hypertension, Traditional and Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Herbal Medicine, Science Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Hypertension is a significant public health issue globally. It is also one of the primary causes of cardiovascular diseases, strokes and kidney failures as well as premature death (World Health Organization, 2023). It has been estimated that over 1 billion adults across the globe are living with hypertension (World Health Organization, 2023), and many people either have not been diagnosed, or are not properly managed. Despite successes in treating hypertension with drugs, achieving effective control of blood pressure has been hindered by side effects associated with many antihypertensive drugs, limited ability for patients to access medical care due to financial limitations and by patients not adhering to their prescribed treatment plans. There is, therefore, growing interest among patients regarding the use of alternative methods to treat their hypertension. Such methods may include traditional methods (e.g., herbal medicine), complementary methods (e.g., dietary supplements) and alternative methods (e.g., mind-body therapies), as defined by the World Health Organization (2022).

Increasing use of Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) reflects a shift toward more holistic and patient centered approaches to manage chronic illnesses such as hypertension. International research has shown that many people with high blood pressure use Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM), and that their usage is determined by how they think about TCAM, how they view whether or not it works, the availability of TCAM, and the level of dissatisfaction they feel with the medicines given to them by their doctors (Erku et al., 2016). This research indicates that TCAM usage

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occurs in many different regions of the world because TCAM usage is shaped by the culture and health-seeking behavior of the individual.

In Southeast Asia, specifically in the Philippines, the use of TCAM has historical roots as part of the traditional indigenous healing process. According to Palileo-Villanueva et al. (2022), the majority of Filipino adults diagnosed with high blood pressure report using TCAM, specifically herbal and biologically based treatments, and primarily for their complementary effects to western medicine. Scientific studies have begun exploring the mechanisms by which TCAM may influence blood pressure. Huang and Liu (2025), reported that herbal medicine(s) work to lower blood pressure via their antioxidant effects, promoting relaxation of the vascular system, and altering the way that the body regulates blood pressure through the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system. Brook et al. (2008), noted that the use of mind-body practices, (e.g., meditation) and controlled breathing techniques reduce blood pressure by reducing stress and the activity of the sympathetic nervous system. Given the impact of the experiences of patients utilizing TCAM on their willingness to seek out health care services, their adherence to treatment recommendations, and their understanding of the safety and effectiveness of the treatment modalities utilized, further study of these experiences is critical. According to Nguyen et al. (2023), in many instances, patients are able to sustain their use of TCAM despite there being a lack of solid clinical evidence to support its efficacy and hence understand better why patients make the choices they do and how they practice.

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Thus, this study sought to explore the experiences of individuals in the utilization of Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine for hypertension management and to examine how these experiences may be implemented within scientific inquiry.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants of the study, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis. The study aims to determine the Experiences on the Utilization of Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for Hypertension Management: Basis for Educational Program

Research Method

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive research design and in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection. The descriptive qualitative approach focused on the systematic and accurate representation of phenomena as they occurred in natural settings, enabling the faithful documentation of participants' experiences, perceptions, and practices without experimental manipulation.

According to Hall and Liebenberg (2024), the descriptive qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for studies aiming to provide a thorough, holistic, and rich summary of participants' lived experiences, ensuring that the findings remain closely aligned with the data and provide an accurate representation of teachers' perspectives and practices. Guided by this perspective, the present study explored the lived experiences of individuals in the utilization of Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for hypertension

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management, including their beliefs, motivations, challenges, and coping strategies.

Furthermore, it examined how these lived experiences could be meaningfully translated into pedagogical applications in science education, particularly through the integration of TCAM-related concepts into health and science instruction.

Research Design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design, which was a qualitative approach focused on understanding and describing the lived experiences of individuals regarding a particular phenomenon. Phenomenology seeks to reveal the meaning and essence of an experience as it is perceived by participants, emphasizing the subjective realities and interpretations of those who have lived through the phenomenon rather than testing hypotheses or making generalizations (McLeod, 2024; Bantugan, 2025)

This approach was particularly suitable for health and educational research that aimed to explore how individuals experienced and made sense of utilizing Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for hypertension management and how these experiences informed science education.

Phenomenological inquiry involved in-depth engagement with participants, often through interviews, to identify common themes, perceptions, and meanings that emerged from their experiences, allowing the researcher to gain a rich and holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study (Deakin University Library, 2024).

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Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were sixteen (16) purposely selected individuals who had experience in the utilization of Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for the management of hypertension. These participants included four (4) patients from each of the four faith healers in Barangay Alimodias, Miagao, Iloilo, who actively sought or had used TCAM for hypertension.

Participants were selected based on their direct experience with TCAM, ensuring that they could provide rich insights into their beliefs, practices, challenges, and coping strategies related to hypertension management. Only individuals who were willing to openly share their experiences and reflections on the use of TCAM were included in the study. Participants were fully informed about the nature of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to their participation.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was used in this study to select participants who could provide the most relevant and rich information related to the phenomenon under investigation. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2020), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are intentionally chosen based on specific characteristics that are directly related to the research objectives. This approach allowed researchers to identify individuals who had firsthand experience with the phenomenon of interest and could provide detailed and meaningful insights.

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In this study, purposive sampling ensured that the selected participants—individuals who had sought help from faith healers for hypertension management using TCAM—had direct experience with the phenomenon. This method enabled a deep exploration of their lived experiences, beliefs, practices, challenges, and coping strategies, providing rich data to understand how TCAM was utilized and how these experiences informed science education.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study was a researcher-developed interview guide. In qualitative research, an interview schedule is a structured or semi-structured guide containing questions or topics that the researcher intends to explore during interviews. Its purpose is to systematically cover all relevant areas while allowing flexibility for probing and follow-up questions, ensuring rich, detailed, and comparable data across participants (Palinkas et al., 2020).

For this study, the interview guide included questions designed to explore the lived experiences of individuals utilizing Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for hypertension management. A voice and video recorder were also used, with the participants' consent, to ensure accuracy and completeness in documenting the interviews.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Prior to establishing the validity of the researcher-developed interview guide, the instrument was reviewed by the research adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of experts with recognized experience in health, research, and qualitative methods. This

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review aimed to ensure that each question was clear, relevant, and aligned with the objectives of the study.

Validity refers to the degree to which a research instrument accurately measures the concept it intends to examine, and whether the findings, interpretations, and conclusions drawn from the study are meaningful and credible (Marshall & Rossman, 2021). Establishing content validity involved confirming that the questions, structure, and format of the instrument were consistent with the study's framework, research objectives, and phenomenological approach.

The panel's feedback was systematically considered, and modifications were made as necessary, using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (1972) as cited by Soqueña (2021)

Data Gathering Procedures

Prior to the study, the researcher obtained the necessary approvals from the research adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, barangay officials, and the participants, ensuring adherence to ethical standards and informed consent.

Interviews were conducted at locations convenient for participants, such as their homes, community centers, or sites where they consulted faith healers. Participants provided written consent, including permission for voice and video recording to accurately capture their responses.

The study used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore participants' lived experiences, beliefs, practices, challenges, and coping strategies in utilizing Traditional,

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Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for hypertension management. Participants were encouraged to share detailed narratives in a respectful and non-intrusive manner.

After all interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed, consolidated, and organized the data to ensure that participants' experiences and insights were faithfully represented for phenomenological analysis.

Data Analyses

The data collected through the researcher-developed interview guide were analyzed using thematic analysis, a systematic method for identifying, interpreting, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to examine participants' lived experiences, beliefs, practices, challenges, and coping strategies in utilizing Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for hypertension management, while ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the data.

According to Braun and Clarke (2023), thematic analysis offers a systematic yet adaptable approach for examining qualitative data, enabling researchers to uncover both overt and underlying meanings within participants' narratives. This method is especially appropriate for educational research that aims to explore complex social interactions, instructional practices, and organizational dynamics.

The interview transcripts were examined using **Thematic Analysis** (Braun & Clarke, 2023), a method particularly effective for detecting, interpreting, and presenting recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data.

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The analysis followed the standard six-phase process:

(1) Familiarization with Data: Reading and re-reading the transcripts (in local language and English translation).

2. Generating Initial Codes: Assigning short phrases or labels to meaningful segments of data.

3. Searching for Themes: Grouping the initial codes into potential overarching themes and sub-themes that captured significant patterns will be grouped under a theme.

4. Reviewing Themes: Refining and checking the themes against the entire dataset to ensure they accurately reflected the participants' meanings and the study's focus.

5. Defining and Naming Themes: Developing clear, concise, and academically sound names for the final emergent themes (will be presented in Chapter 4).

6. Producing the Report: Weaving the themes, supported by direct quotes, into the narrative structure of the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data (Chapter 4), and linking them to the theoretical framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to explore the experiences of individuals on the utilization of Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for hypertension management and its implementation in Science Education.

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The research aimed to understand how individuals utilize TCAM practices in managing hypertension and how their lived experiences may serve as a basis for integrating community-based health practices into science education.

Specifically, the study sought to determine the experiences of individuals utilizing TCAM for hypertension management, the challenges encountered in its use, the coping strategies employed to address these challenges, and the possible educational implications of these experiences in science education.

The study utilized a qualitative research method using in-depth interviews to collect data from participants. A phenomenological research design was employed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of individuals who utilize TCAM in managing hypertension.

The participants of the study were sixteen (16) purposely selected individuals from Barangay Alimodias, Miagao, Iloilo. These participants consisted of hypertensive patients and traditional healers who have experience in utilizing TCAM for hypertension management. They were selected because of their direct involvement and knowledge of traditional healing practices and herbal medicine.

The research instrument used in the study was a researcher-developed interview guide designed to explore participants' experiences, beliefs, challenges, and coping strategies in utilizing TCAM. To ensure accurate documentation of the interviews, voice and video recorders were utilized with the consent of the participants.

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The interview guide was validated by a panel of experts to ensure the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions in relation to the objectives of the study. The researcher considered the comments and suggestions provided during the validation process.

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher obtained necessary permissions from the barangay officials and the participants to ensure ethical conduct of the research. Interviews were conducted in locations convenient for the participants such as their homes or community spaces.

The collected data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed the researcher to identify recurring patterns and themes from the participants' narratives.

The results showed that the patients experienced meaningful and positive use of TCAM for the control of hypertension. Adopting TCAM as a natural and accessible process were presented to the participants, especially when they had to take herbal remedies and traditional healing practices. These techniques were thought to aid blood-pressure control as well as alleviate dizziness and headaches and enhance general well-being. Furthermore, TCAM was deeply embedded within cultural traditions and in community practices that made this approach a health strategy and a shared cultural experience.

Even with these advantages, some barriers encountered by respondents toward TCAM usage included limitations in the effectiveness and availability of herbal remedies, reliance on personal belief and trust in determining treatment outcomes, and risks associated with the

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improper use of herbal medicines. These problems point to the need for proper knowledge and guidance in their application, as well as concerns regarding the consistency, safety, and scientific validation of traditional practices.

Participants responded to these challenges utilizing multiple coping strategies in a diverse manner. At many levels, this meant mixing herbal remedies with conventional medicine to take a more balanced approach to treatment. Community knowledge sharing and traditional learning about TCAM were involved for these participants. Participants also made lifestyle changes and adopted preventive health practices to support their overall health, such as maintaining healthy diets and managing stress. With their holistic approach to hypertension management, these strategies showcase a proactive and resilient approach to addressing hypertension and aligning traditional and modern healthcare approaches.

The results of the study are as follows:

The experiences of individuals revealed that Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine remains an important health practice within many communities. Herbal remedies and traditional healing practices continue to be used because they are accessible, affordable, and culturally familiar. These practices provide individuals with a sense of comfort and empowerment in managing their health conditions. The findings also indicate that TCAM practices are strongly influenced by cultural traditions and community knowledge. Many participants learned about herbal medicine and traditional healing practices from elders, family

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members, and traditional healers within their communities. This demonstrates the important role of cultural heritage in shaping health practices and beliefs.

The challenges faced by individuals using Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) for managing hypertension reveal the need for a more balanced and integrated healthcare approach. While TCAM is culturally important and widely used due to its accessibility and perceived benefits, it clearly cannot fully replace conventional medical treatment, especially for chronic and high-risk conditions. The findings show that people often exercise caution by mixing herbal remedies with prescribed medications, which reflects a practical approach to seeking health solutions. However, the strong reliance on personal beliefs and experiences to judge treatment effectiveness can make it hard to ensure evidence-based care. This reliance may influence decisions and delay getting the appropriate medical help. There should also be better cooperation between traditional practitioners and healthcare professionals. By creating an integrated healthcare system that respects cultural practices while ensuring scientific support and patient safety, we can achieve better health outcomes for people with hypertension.

Furthermore, the study highlights that despite certain challenges, individuals remain resourceful in managing their health through traditional practices. Participants demonstrated adaptability by adjusting their lifestyle habits, sharing knowledge with community members, and seeking both traditional and modern healthcare services when necessary. This demonstrates a strong belief in one's ability to influence personal health, as people engage proactively in overseeing and enhancing their well-being even with minimal formal support. It

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also indicates the significance of community connections as valuable sources of assistance and information, emphasizing the ongoing utilization of culturally relevant practices. Furthermore, this flexibility indicates that individuals can merge various healthcare methods, showcasing the potential for improved results through a cooperative and culturally aware healthcare system.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings and insights derived from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Individuals with hypertension should continue to practice responsible health management by combining traditional remedies with proper medical consultation. While herbal medicine may provide relief and support well-being, it is important to seek professional medical advice to ensure safe and effective treatment.

Science teachers may consider incorporating discussions about traditional health practices such as herbal medicine into science instruction. By linking scientific concepts with real-life community practices, teachers can make science lessons more meaningful and relevant to students' everyday experiences.

Schools may promote culturally responsive learning by encouraging students to explore community knowledge and traditional practices within a scientific framework. This approach may enhance students' understanding of science while also fostering respect for cultural traditions.

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Educational institutions and curriculum developers may consider integrating community-based health practices such as TCAM into science education programs. This can help students develop scientific literacy and critical thinking skills while evaluating traditional practices using scientific principles.

Local communities may also benefit from health education programs that provide accurate information about the safe and responsible use of herbal medicine and traditional healing practices.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies in other communities to further explore the role of Traditional, Complementary, and Alternative Medicine in health management and its potential applications in education. Further studies may also investigate the scientific properties of commonly used herbal plants and their effects on hypertension management.

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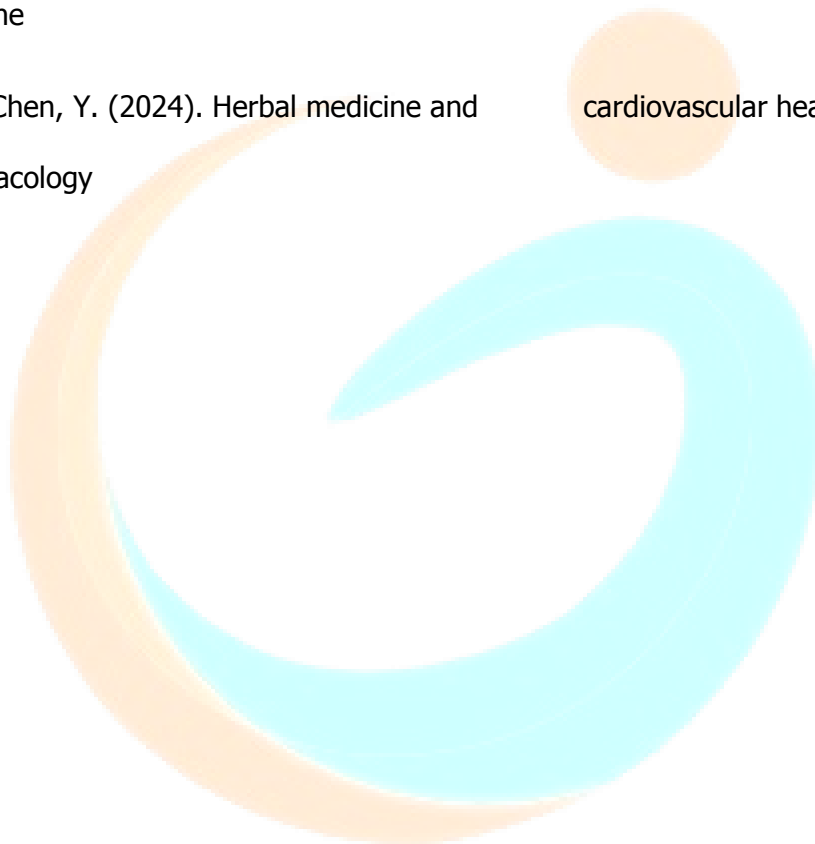


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