

**MATERNAL HEALTH CARE PRACTICES AMONG INDIGENOUS WOMEN
OF JANUAY, ILOILO: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY**



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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the beliefs, rituals and traditional practices of maternal health care among indigenous women of reproductive age in Janiuay, Iloilo.

The participants in this study were nine (9) indigenous women belonging to the Panay Bukidnon tribe and residing in Barangay Quipot, Janiuay, Iloilo. The indigenous women who participated in the study were aged 15-44 years old, with at least one child, and willing to participate in the study.

This is a descriptive-qualitative study that included an in-depth interview and focus- group discussion. The analysis of the data was done using thematic analysis to interpret qualitative research data in order to identify meaningful information. Their maternal healthcare practices were organized into themes and sub themes.

The practices were classified in terms of menstruation, conception and pregnancy, as well as during labor and delivery, and post partum period. The findings of the study were the experiences on menstruation centered on practices to prevent profuse blood flow, to temporarily stop menstruation, to promote hygiene. Moreover, it included food to

be eaten, and prevention of sickness or being ill. At the prenatal stage, most beliefs are diligently observed to be safe on labor, delivery and provided protection both for the mother and the child during conception until postpartum. These included preventing miscarriage or abortion, preventing cord coil and preventing illness to the mother, as well as preparing for an easy birth. During labor and delivery, experiences were centered on relying on traditional healers, and the desire for the infant to be protected and many other beliefs and practices on easing the difficulties and pains of delivery. While postpartum care centered on preventing *bughat* for the mothers and restoring them to strength and good health. The maternal healthcare practices also prepared the woman for breastfeeding and taking care of the baby.

Moreover, the indigenous women with the help of *paltera*, healer, and quack doctors have their symbolic offerings and a solemn prayer wherein the religious and spiritual aspect of a person was given consideration. The goal of the rituals is to cast away evil spirits.

Generally, the indigenous women still observe their distinctive cultural traditions today despite their exposure to information provided by the healthcare professionals. There is still the strong influence of elders and in-laws in terms of maternal care. Also, traditional beliefs project a reliance on the *paltera* or traditional birth attendant for advices although some younger indigenous women no longer adhere due to information acquired from barangay healthcare workers.