

# DOCUMENTING THE TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITUALS OF THE TAGAKAULO TRIBE IN MALITA, DAVAO OCCIDENTAL

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to document and investigate the practice of the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo tribe in Malita, Davao Occidental. This utilized the ethnographic approach, using the purposive sampling procedure. Participant observation and in-depth interviews were used in gathering the data. Findings revealed that panag-tawag, bribe services, the man proving their intentions to the woman's parents, and the obligation to marry within the tribe are the traditional rituals. These rituals are rigidly followed because members of the tribe believe it is the way of receiving their Gods' provisions and blessed married life. On the other hand, the practice of traditional marriage ritual itself has socio-cultural implications, two of its most alarming implications involve imposed responsibilities and obligations to children to be wed at young ages and the cultural insensitivity of other communities because of the tribe's bribe services or the giving of bugay. Nonetheless, this sheds light on the impact of the practice of traditional marriages on the relationship of Tagakaulo tribesmen with other communities as well. Hence, external interventions by NCIP and LGUs must be necessary to address its drawbacks, socio-cultural impact on the wellbeing of minority groups.

**Keywords:** *Tagakaulo, traditional marriage rituals, ethnographic, in-depth interview, socio-cultural implications*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, many societies have restricted and legally prohibited the marriage of young children. However, cases involving IP groups remain unbothered. In the global landscape, these traditional marriage practices vary but continue to exist. For instance, among the central Eskimos and some Northwest Coast tribes, marriages are arranged and concluded that involve young children to cement relations between groups (Minocher, Duda, & Jaeggi, 2019).

Alarmingly, age gaps between partners may heighten the risk for domestic violence, marital rape, unemployment, and sexual infections like HIV/AIDS (Chandra-Mouli & Sadidiqi, 2018). Although there is evidence showing the psychological and physiological effects of bearing a child at such young ages, early marriages among tribes remain excluded in the law to respect tribal groups' independent beliefs and values, a display of respect and recognition of their unique ways of living (Gray, 2016). Issues involving protecting a child and preserving their human rights to prevent early marriage are not discussed in marriage laws (Muntamah et al., 2019).

In the Philippines, marriage and wedding rituals vary based on how they are associated with different tribes (Sumedca, Langay & Guidangen, 2016). Some tribes that have not yet been recognized and highlighted gained interest among researchers. The Lubuagan of Kalinga

places the region in the highest regard. Most of the finest aspects of the Lubuagan (Kalinga) culture can be depicted in their traditional marriage practices (Salbang & Maslang, 2010). Marriage is an important community affair that integrates other cultural practices.

Mindanao is the country's cultural melting pot; the culture has been influenced by various cultures worldwide. Although Mindanao carries a strong flavor from other islands, there are people or groups of people who live on the island, each with distinct, diverse, and independent marriage customs and traditions. People from this island preserve and nurture cultural domains. They are rich when it comes to their beliefs and practices. One of them is the Tagakaulo tribe (Levesque, 2018). Tagakaulo tribe in Mindanao is one of the various groups of Indigenous People in Southern Philippines, specifically residing in the far-flung area of the provinces of Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, and Sarangani. They are generally farmers and consider their land their source of life (Zapico et al., 2015).

On the other hand, Tagakaulo's culture and traditions, particularly their marriage or wedding rituals, have not been highlighted locally, nationally, or internationally. Further investigation of the Tagakaulo tribe's marriage ceremonies is needed to understand better if and how this type of marriage affects Tagakaulo students' educational pursuits. According to the extant literature, there are relatively few qualitative studies on marital rites in general. This curiosity is mirrored in a revived study on the consequences of such a matrimonial practice on educational progress in school-aged children (Caron, 2019).

Consequently, with these considerations, and the fact that there seems to be a dearth in the literature documenting the traditional marriage rituals of Tagakaulo in Malita, Davao Occidental, particularly in the country and much less in Region XI, I decided to embark on this research paper. Moreover, being an educator, I can promote awareness and preserve its customs and cultural value by documenting the authenticity, underpinning meanings, and dexterity of the significance of Tagakaulo's traditional marriage and wedding rituals in its cultural history, customs, and traditions. The documentation could serve as good material for promoting appreciation and love for Tagakaulo's cultural heritage. I hoped to boost the morale of the Tagakaulo community to make them proud of their own cultural identity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to address the gap in literature discussing the marriage rituals of the IP group, Tagakaulo from Malita, Davao Occidental. By employing the ethnographical approach, I embarked on studying the traditional marriage practice of the Tagakaulo and witnessed firsthand the rituals and activities. Through participant observations, backed by in-depth interviews of Tagakaulo couples in the tribe's community, this study answered the questions on rituals conducted, their bases, and their socio-cultural implications.

Further, not only can this study shed light on the unique traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo tribe, but it also served as an avenue for its members to impart to the world their experiences and their silent prayers to ask for appropriate interventions from external forces to interfere and connect further with their tribe. This also sheds light on looking at the sustainability of culture to the people and the wider context. This allowed a more in-depth understanding of their significant cultural practices passed down from generation to generation. This study was of great relevance to the underpinnings of great cultural value in marriage, customs, and traditions, which provided a better description of this unique tribe's traditional marriage.

### **Research Questions**

This ethnographical research paper aims to document and explore the traditional marriage ritual practices of the Tagakaulo tribe from Malita, Davao Occidental. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo tribe?
2. What are the bases of traditional marriage rituals?
3. What are the socio-cultural implications of the marriage practice of the tribe?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study used the qualitative method of research utilizing the ethnographic design. To identify and be able to describe a group or a group of cultural identities in-real-life-situation of a particular situation, ethnographic research plays an important role. Ethnography research is considered one of the most important qualitative studies. Researchers observe and communicate with the target group to obtain valuable cultural knowledge to understand and infer a nuance of unique traditional practices to be described clearly for the information of its adversities (Sarkar et al., 2019).

Moreover, I believe that it is more appropriate to use the qualitative design to understand more nuanced details of the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo. This is in line with what Creswell (2013) contended that qualitative studies are often conducted to explore the issues of an understudied population, especially when there are only a few conceptual studies in the area. With this, I obtained the needed data regarding the marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo, with a plethora of considerations for ethnographic research.

### Research Participants

Using the purposive sampling, I arrived at gathering eight (8) Tagakaulo participants, who were couples, and had experienced the Tagakaulo traditional marriage rituals. Prospective participants that meet the criteria analyzed were examined using the researcher's pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria, considering that these select individuals will provide relevant and rich data on the topic of interest (Patton, 2015). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), criterion-based selection works effectively when the persons being researched have had similar experiences. In the case of the current study, the ethnography will explore the experiences of a married couple in Tagakaulo Tribe in Malita, Davao Occidental. The sample size focused on Creswell's (2013) guidelines for ethnographical studies, which recommended interviewing at least 5 to 25 informants before achieving data saturation.

To ensure the participant's background and experience, all the fifteen participants were asked if they were members of the Tagakaulo tribe in the areas of Malita, Davao Occidental, which had experienced the traditional marriage ritual, and if they were at the moment living with the family, regardless of their sex, age and years in marriage. These were the study's inclusion/exclusion criteria, ensuring homogeneity among the participants. In addition, those who expressed interest in participating were encouraged to invite others from her social circle who may qualify for the study. This aided me in recruiting participants, as Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) suggested. Consequently, this helped me to be able to come up with 15 individuals to be interviewed.

## **Data Analysis**

This paper utilized immersion as a method of gathering information. It is the process of entering a community of people who share a common identity to learn more about them. This is accomplished by acquiring a better understanding of the individuals, interactions, scenes, and events at the research location (Allen, 2017). In assessing the data gathered during participant observation, I followed the relevant points of KUTSCHE (1998), who stated that in order to comprehend a practice or culture, one must first learn to set aside assumptions.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Research presented risks to participants; therefore, I ensured that their well-being was safeguarded throughout the research process (Munhall, 2012). As I was obliged to safeguard participants' well-being which involved adhering to the standard ethical principles that included respect for the autonomy of the participants, protecting participants from harm, confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation (Scott, 2013). The study adhered to UM Professional Schools' Ethics Review Committee (UMERC) protocols.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Presented in this section were the themes derived from the analysis of the gathered data. This included the presentation of themes for the researcher's questions and significant statements of the study. There was a total of nine (9) Blaan participants who willingly consented, and participated in the in-depth interviews. Using the validated interview guide questionnaire, the researcher was able to answer the research questions of the study.

### **RESULTS**

#### **Rituals to Fulfill to Enter Marriage**

As I witnessed the wedding ritual of the tribe, there are four significant rituals needed to be done before members of the tribe are allowed to get married. These significant rituals involve the practice of panag-tawag, bribe service, a man proving to the family of the woman they are deserving, and the strict protocol of obligating the Tagakaulo members to marry within the tribe only.



Image 1. Panag-Tawag And Giving of Bugay

I arrived at the community of the Tagakaulo tribe at Sitio Biao Brgy Pinalpalan for the first time., I received their heartwarming greetings welcoming me into their community. I witnessed their ritual, which they called "panag-tawag." In this ritual, both the man's and woman's families will gather with their relatives. From what I initially observed in the gathering of both families, I noticed that the groom's family is enthusiastic and excited to be married to the woman. Meanwhile, the woman kept on looking down the floor with her shoulders down, so I asked her permission to ask why she seemed uninterested in the gathering for her hand in marriage. In a defeated voice, she answered that she did not want to be married just yet because she wanted to live in the City to finish college, as she was still young to be married.

Her words resonated with me. I saw how defeated and dejected the woman was. On the other hand, I noticed that men have strong romantic feelings toward the woman, which led him (and his family) to conduct a panag-tawag to ask for the woman's hand. I hope that she becomes delighted to promise that he will provide for the woman's needs as long as she accepts his hand in marriage. The panag-tawag was lengthy because the woman's family had demanded as a form of bugay or compensation. If the man and his family can provide an answer to the demands, the woman's hand will be given. Once the agreement is decided, and both families have talked enough, the prayer of the tribe's datu will signal the end of the ritual.

The core idea of this ritual entails that before the wedding, the Tagakaulo, both the family of the man and woman, come together to call for God, and they call it "Panag-tawag." This is the ritual that involves the parents and the relevant members of the two families coming together to agree. During this process, the tribal chief of the tribe must approve of this prospective marriage. This practice serves as a consent that would allow any wedding of the tribe to transpire. During the marriage that I witnessed, the chieftain permitted me to come

and witness one of the family gatherings. The purpose and goal of panag-tawag were made clear to me when I proceeded to conduct the in-depth interviews.

Most of the responses highlighted that Tribal chieftains are key figures in gatherings because they serve as the critical deciding factor between the agreements that will occur between individuals. This affirmed my observations. When I accompanied the chieftain, they stood between the families, served as arbitrators between their propositions, and had the last words during every discussion, which supported their power to either permit or not to permit marriage within their tribe. In an interview with participant C, I was able to grasp the concept of this ritual when they said:

*Wala man kayo miy mga ginabuhat pero adunay miy bugay inig panag-tawag didtoa na sabutan ang bugay nga gipangayo. Human ang pagpondo sa laki sa panimaly sa baye aron iipakita nga alang siya ipakasal sa baye. Human ana kay kasal, didtoa mag abot ang pamilya sa laki ug baye human magsuot ang baye sa pangkasal. Mahitabo kini sa pagtugot sa among chief sa tribo. (KII\_PC\_RQ1)*

We don't do much but we have the bugay when called upon the amount of bugay will be agreed. Then the man will stay at the house of the woman to show that he is capable to be married to the woman. After that, the marriage, the family of the man and woman will meet and the woman will wear our clothes for the wedding. This will happen with the approval of our Tribe's chief.

Participant C spoke of this as common knowledge in their community. A ritual and practice that they have experienced and witnessed for years. In the same light, participant F indicated that "Panag-tawag" is a ritual that unites the family of the man and woman, and this would indicate the start of the roles of both families in the forthcoming traditional marriage. The participant verbatim:

*Naa miy ginabuhat nga panagtawag, kung asa ang nga sampiton kay ang atong ginoo kay ang tribo sa Tagakaulo naga ulog kini ug mga ritwal aron pagasugang mga buluhaton sa paghiusa sa matag pamilya. (KII\_PF\_RQ1)*

We do have a practice called Panag-tawag, which we call god because the tribe of the Tagakaulo adheres to rituals to face practices to unite the families.

Furthermore, I also noticed that during the panag-tawag, discussions about the money or forms of compensation are the center of the gathering. During this process, I hear statements regarding money, land titles, crops, farm animals, horses, and cows. The amount of compensation is usually spoken by the woman's family, which the family of the man must meet. In this process, the man's family can also ask for either increase and find other forms of compensation when they cannot afford to give money in cash. The families of the man would then have an exchange of appeals before they arrive at a reasonable amount that the Tribal chief will permit.

Moreover, most of the part, the involved man and woman do not speak nor communicate with one another. From what I have observed, the woman takes her family's place, same as the man, while the rest of the family members, along with the tribal chief, talk and settle the offerings and intentions of both parties.

Again, I was able to ask the participants to elaborate on the practice of panag-tawag, and they willingly did as though they had encountered and hosted many marriages in the past to the present. Also, in the course of the interviews, the participants did not mention any

indications that the practice has changed, evolved, or had other alternatives. From when I was immersed in the community, there was no mention of changes in the practices over time. Nonetheless, the practice of Panag-tawag is an important preparation before a traditional marriage of the Tagakaulo is bounded to happen.

Following the panag-tawag, the man or the groom-to-be plays a crucial role for a marriage to be possible. His duties include living and staying at the house or the family of the woman they want to become their wife. To be there, the man must prove that they are deserving of the woman and prove that he is capable of becoming part of the woman's family. Although during the panag-tawag, men have only spoken words about the bribe services, this ritual necessitates them to take action and prove to others their intentions. In the course of this form of service, I saw men chopping woods, men participating in activities of the woman's family, fetching water with initiative, and under orders of the family. In their service, the woman's family does not permit the man to approach her for a more extended period.

As participant A said that the man must wake up early, look for firewood, and do house chores.

*Ang buhaton sa lalaki didto siya mupuyo sa babae. Ipakita niya sa ginikanan sa babae nga karapatdapat jud siya nga mahimong isa nga... isa sa parte sa pamilya sa babae, nya sayo siya mumata. Mangahoy siya, siyay mulihok sa unsay lihokonon sa balay. Mao nay ritwal sa amoa sa una. (KII\_PA\_RQ1)*

The first thing that the man will do was to stay at the bride's house. He will show that he is worthy to be part of the woman's family he will need to wake up early, ready firewood, do some house chores, or anything that needed to be done in the house.

As a married man, I believe that participant E has experienced this ritual based on his vivid narrative of the ritual.

*Sa wala pa ang kasal, muadto gyud ang laki sa panimalay sa baye. Gikan didto kinanglan magpakita ang laki sa pamilya sa baye nga siya kay gusto jud na makasal sa baye unya kaya niya. Mahitabo human ana kay magsabot na kung pila ang pangayo nga bugay. (KII\_PE\_RQ1)*

Before the wedding, the man must go to the house of the woman to prove their intentions to marry. After that, they will agree on the amount of bugay.

The Tagakaulo conducts different rituals for their traditional marriages, that is when the man goes to the woman's house before the wedding, the giving of bugay, and the wedding. This is a practice that members of the community believe to be just, with the statement of participant D, who casually spoke about the role of men in their traditional marriage ritual.

*Kuan ra, lahi kay lahi man inig sa wala pa ning adto ang laki sa balay sa baye ug inig maghatagay na ug bugay, human kasal. (KII\_PD\_RQ1)*

They are different when the man would go to the family of the woman, and in talking about the bugay.

Based on the responses, we can infer that men in the tribe of Tagakaulos bear a critical role in traditional marriage rituals. Despite this, their responses suggest that men know and understand their role. Without a doubt and form of concern, men have recognized their responsibilities. At the time of my short immersion in the community, men do have a

stronger hold of order and responsibility in the community. When asked about their experiences, there was not a form of distaste nor doubt reflected on their gender roles in the community. Instead, there was an imposed feeling of honor, for they believe that they have served their ancestors and their tribe. Also, while in the community, I have noticed how most of the time, in terms of the marriage rituals, individuals who are most involved in this ritual are primarily the woman's family and the man who is interested in marrying.

Subsequently, after they have seen the man perform his duties, the amount of compensation follows as stated by participant E.

*Sa wala pa ang kasal, muadto gyud ang laki sa pamilya sa baya. Gikan didto kinanglan magpakita ang laki sa pamilya sa baya nga siya kay gusto jud na makasal sa baya unya kaya niya. Mahitabo human ana kay magsabot na kung pila ang pangayo nga bugay. (KII\_PE\_RQ1)*

Before the wedding, the man must go to the house of the woman. From then, they must the man must show to the family of the woman that he likes to be married to the woman and he can (financially support the woman). After that, they will agree on the amount of bugay.

Another significant ritual they need to follow is to adhere to bribe service, or what they called giving of "bugay," in the tribe. Giving or offering compensation to the woman's family is expected. And in the Tagakaulo tribe, this is also relevant and practiced. This could be considered one of the main reasons or basis if the woman's family would allow a man to be married to their child. Traditionally, bugay does not need to be money, but any form of compensation that would equal the amount agreed upon by both families. This was observable, as I have previously mentioned, during the panag-tawag. The families try to settle the amount of compensation that the family of the woman requests and would have an exchange of appeals until the amount or form of compensation is found reasonable.

During my immersion, I heard discussions about families of men offering cattle, land, and properties that could equal the amount set and agreed upon during panag-tawag. Most evidently, I noticed how the families of women were firm and sure about their agreement for bugay. It was not the amount that mattered but the display of the man's capacity to raise their daughter and their family in the future. Adding to that, no form of dissuading existed between families after the agreement was set—there was a deep respect for each family.

On some occasions, I also had random conversations with the Kagawads and some members of the tribe. The gist was that the successful giving of the bugay to the woman's parents implies that the man has owned the woman, and her parents are no longer allowed to interfere in their affairs. They imparted that in domestic abuse cases, the woman's parents are traditionally considered not to have the right to interfere with how the man treats his wife. In an in-depth interview, participant A elaborated on this with their statement:

*Sa paghisgot sa ginikanan sa lalaki didto sa ginikanan sa babae ang una nilang hisgotan is pila ang pangayo sa ilang anak, pila ang presyo ba bugay. Kaning panawag-tawag it means sa bugay naman ni kaning muingon ang ginikanan sa... or laing mga tribo muingon nga ang pasabot sa amoa nga gibugayan is bayad kung mao lagi ingon kanang... kaning sangkamulo maoy tawag nga wala kauyon ang lain tribo sa among tribo kay tungod silbi gibaligya lang ana lang... gibaligya maskin kulatahon ka walay mahimo imong ginikanan kay gisunod man ang tradisyon.(KII\_PA\_RQ1)*

Before that... when the parents of the guy talk with the parents of the woman, they will talk first about how much the price or bugay in our term. This panawag-tawag means for the bugay when the parents say that... or for the other tribe, it called it was like they were paid... Sangkamulo is when the other tribe does not agree with our tribe because it appears like it is being sold... Being sold and even if the husband will hurt his wife the parents would not have any rights since they followed the tradition.

Again, the compensation is not limited to cash or money, but anything that would amount to the agreed amount. Participant E mentioned that it could be things, the title or deed, farm animals—anything so long as it is equal to the agreed amount of compensation.

*Dapat makahatag sa bugay nga gipanagayo sa bisan unsa nga butang. Pananglitan dili makahatag ang laki ug kwarto pwede pud yuta, kabaw o kanang mga kabutangan, or kabayo ana. (KII\_PE\_RQ1)*

They must be able to give bugay or other things. For example, the man cannot give them money, they can offer land, cow, or things or horses.

Further, participant G reiterated that giving of bugay is only part of the community, which is indeed true. And in stating this, the participant stressed greatly that giving of bugay is simply a part of the many rituals in the community, implying that it is also deep-rooted and is not solely the basis for a traditional marriage of the tribe to thrive and be successfully conducted.

*Adunay buhaton na rituals alang nga matuudan nga ikasal ang laki sa baye. Sama sa pagsabot sa bugay, pagpuyo sa bay sa baye, sa pagkasal ug ilabi na sa paghatag sa bugay jud. (KII\_PG\_RQ1)*

There are rituals to be done for the man to marry the woman. In agreement about the bugay staying at the house of the woman.

The giving of bugay is usually done by a man chosen by parents for their child. Most commonly, the bugay is a must even for individuals who have been engaged since their childhood.

*Makahatag ug bugay. Gipili sa ginikanan ang mga mahimong mag-tiayon kay kadalsan gisabot naman jud gud na sila bata pa. (KII\_PF\_RQ1)*

To give bugay. Parents choose the groom and bride and mostly they are arranged to be married when they were young.

Again, the giving of bugay is not limited to money, during my immersion I was able to gather bits of information regarding this as well, few have been given land titles, farm animals, and sometimes they receive food, and rice of the same quantity. Also, from their statements, just like the panag-tawag and the duties of the man, giving of bugay is one of the major deciding factors whether the parents of the woman would agree to marry their child to the man and his family. This is a task that men in the community must follow and practice, however, despite the financial weight put on the shoulders of the men in the community, when I went into the community, I heard no complaints and observed activities that involved men reiterating their contributions

Another ritual that members of the Tagakaulo tribe must keep in mind, even before the marriage proposals, is both men and women are only obligated to marry tribe members. I noticed about the Tagakaulo is their pride and joy in their rituals. Hence, it did not surprise me when the chieftain shared that most marriages in their tribe are blood-related; some women marry their uncles or older cousins.

To ensure the continuous unity and flow of practice of traditional rituals, the Tagakaulo does not traditionally permit the marriage of one Tagakaulo member to members of other tribes. It is believed that by marrying only among the tribe, the tribe members protect and preserve their tribe. In some cases, older tribe members prefer the next generations to marry even their relatives so long as the tribe's culture is preserved, shared, and practiced.

The marriage that I witnessed was about a man and woman who was already old enough for the wedding, and their age gaps were not large. I asked around, looking for older couples who could impart their experiences, and have witnessed the early marriages in the tribe. Reluctantly, participant A shared her experience with how her parents did not allow her to like men that do not belong in their community. In stating so, I noticed that she was stating how her parents would feel, how it could serve their tribe, and how they are left to marry their relatives if left with no choice.

*Akong ginikanan dili siya musugot kung naa koy mauyonan nga laing tribo dili sila musugot kay ilaha gusto ang matuman kay ang tribo namo gusto nga mapapreserve pa ba. Mapapreserve unya pagkahiman kay dili sila gusto magkaminyo ka lain nga kanag tribo kay tungod gusto nila nga inyung tribo magdaghan, magsanay unya maskin uyoan nimo or ig-agaw nimo pwede ka minyoan. (KII\_PA\_RQ1)*

My parents, they don't want that I will marry another tribe since they wanted to preserve the tribe. In preserving it they don't want anyone to marry from another tribe since wanted to increase the numbers of the tribe members by allowing you to even marry your uncle or cousin.

Similarly, in a self-convincing manner, participant H said that marrying one's tribe members would imply that the woman and their family do not have to explain once again what is the purpose of their marriage rituals. Somehow, participant H entails that it would be preferable for the tribe to marry another from the same tribe, but it is also a form of convenience that allows the families to no longer explain over again the purpose and relevance of the community.

*Kuan, dapat katribo lang namo aron among mapadayon ang tradisyon ug alang dili na maglisod mi nga magpasabot sa among mga rituals nga dapat agian sa wa pay kasal. (KII\_PH\_RQ1)*

They must be a member of the same tribe to continue the marriage traditions and also to make it not difficult to make them to understand the rituals they must follow before the wedding.

Moreover, this does not always mean that the means of preservation is right in the eyes of others but is a tribal belief that continues within the Tagakaulo tribe. To marry within the tribe is a means of traditionally preserving the rituals and traditions of the tribe. As mentioned by Participants A and H, marriage within the tribe is a relevant marriage ritual that must persist because the tribe believed this to be the best possible way to maintain, sustain, and protect the unity of the tribe after generations—which, based on my experience was fruitful because,

at the level that I could notice, the community is thriving and remains at peace with one another.

The rituals I mentioned are the key to conducting a traditional marriage ritual. It is what consists of Tagakaulo's traditional marriage ritual. For the Tagakaulo tribe of Malita, Davao Occidental, to successfully adhere to and follow the mentioned rituals is a successful marriage that blesses the tribe. After these are successfully followed, marriage would then proceed.

During the marriage, to become more enlightened by the rituals associated with the marriage, I was enthusiastic as I was able to interview one of the members of the tribal council. They extended their enthusiasm about my presence and the study because only a handful of people recognize their tribe based on their traditions. Also, they wanted to change some aspects of their customs and traditions to allow them to prosper and be better preserved throughout the generations. Throughout our discourse, they imparted that they hoped to change their marriage rituals for the children, including the arranged marriage, because, in modern times, it is not a practice that benefits the young generations. After all, Lumads now have gained education and understanding of their rights. In addition to that, they imparted that the age range of those who will be married in their tribe ages at least 18 years old, for some instances, those who wish to be married traditionally can still proceed with it, but they must be wed in the church when both reach 18 years old.

As mentioned, I witnessed a traditional marriage ritual at practice when I was immersed in the community. During the actual wedding ceremonial rites, I was among the members of the tribe gathered together in one place. Children and the elderly alike were present. They were present to witness the union of two people, who they believed that under the guidance of God, overcame the challenges associated with the previously mentioned rituals.

On the actual day of the wedding, the people play gongs, sing and play the log drum. The woman prepares food. There is a lot of food to prepare. There would be as many as three sacks of rice, money, and beverage. When the rice and viand are cooked, a beautiful mat is carefully spread out in the large open room. The mat is attractively spread with a beautiful sarong and pillow placed in the center. When the mat is spread and the pillow placed, the young man is quickly seated on the pillow. After that, the young lady is fetched from the bedroom. She is brought to the side of the man and seated at the left of the man. Her mother and all of the elders are also seated with him. After they have situated themselves on the mat and pillow, quickly rice is brought, placed carefully on a large platter, and likewise the viand and water.

To continue, all of her elders, including her mother, will sit with him. After they have settled upon the mat and pillow, rice is promptly delivered and neatly arranged on a huge tray and the viand and water. Rice, broth, and water are delivered to their side. An elder is referred to as Balke' or Datu, and he is the one who marries them. The person who will marry them first washes his hands and creates a rice ball. He feeds the rice ball to the young man first after forming it. The rice that was left leftover after feeding the man is fed to the girl (see Image 2).



Image 2. Rice balls created by Balke or Ontik During Wedding

The pork, beef, or chicken is also taken there by the datu. He gives the viand to the man. However, the male eats half, and the wife eats the other half. The two of them then wash their hands and eat. They eat from the large dish together, accompanied by their fathers, mothers, and elders. No one speaks after they have eaten. The person marrying them hastily grabs the guy and woman's arms and stands them up. He urges them to stand up three times and sits them down three times.

Finally, after this ceremony is complete, the man and woman are now married. The woman will, from then on, live at the place of the man, serve, and bear the man-children of their own. In a successful wedding, such as the one I witnessed, regardless of the woman's feelings, members of the tribe believe that both are blessed to be together. Presented in Table 1 were the themes that were derived from the in-depth interviews, note that these were expounded and presented in the narratives of the researcher.

**Table 1.**

Major Themes and Core Ideas Traditional Marriage Rituals of the Tagakaulo Tribe

Major themes	Core Ideas
<b>Panag-Tawag</b>	The marriage takes place when the ritual is done and is approved by the tribal chieftain.
	Panawag-tawag is done as a ritual to call God for unity between the families.
	The panag-tawag is where the family of the man and woman come in terms of the marriage.
<b>Giving of Bugay</b>	The parents of the man and woman discuss the price of the bugay in the panag-tawag.

	Discussion of the bugay during the panag-tawag.
	Agreement of the parties in terms of the amount of the bugay.
	The families agree on the amount of bugay.
	The rituals include the discussion and agreement of the bugay.
	The actual giving of the bugay to the woman's family.
	The man should be able to provide bugay.
	The man must prove he is worthy of the woman to the parents and they must provide the payment equal to the amount agreed.
<b>Duties of The Man</b>	The man lives in the woman's household to prove he is worthy of marriage.
	The man goes to the woman's household to prove to the woman's parents that he is worthy and capable of marriage.
	The man goes to the woman's household.
	The man lives in the woman's household.
	The man lives in the woman's household to prove he is worthy of marriage by doing household work.
<b>Marriage Within the Tribe</b>	Marriage within the tribe to preserve culture and bloodline.
	Members of the same tribe to marry.

### **Rigidly Adhere to Rituals to be Blessed**

Like any other culture, the unique tribe of Tagakaulo from Malita, Davao Occidental, has deep-rooted practices and rituals passed down through generations because of their beliefs. Fortunately, I was one of the few individuals who could shed light on this, particularly having to uncover and understand the bases for conducting their traditional marriage rituals.

After the marriage, I was able to uncover three bases for the tribe's strict adherence to the rituals regardless of its implications. Apparently, the practice thrives because the tribe members are accustomed to the practice, it is believed to be a way to obtain God's provision for a good marriage, and it is good for the couple, the families, and the tribe as a whole.

In an in-depth interview, they imparted that this has been a practice for generations. The members have learned that people utilize this as a bedrock for finding a lasting companion. The bride services procedure was mentioned and based on the panag-tawag that I witnessed the tribe does not have any negative input about this practice. This might be because, for centuries, giving compensation was a practice that even Tagakulo children saw as basically a ritual of marriage.

For instance, Participant A mentioned that the giving of bugay has always been part of their rituals. This is practiced by their parents and by the next generations.

*Ang reason ani nganong mao ra gihapon nga... mao ra gihapon nga tradisyon or among na... nakuan karon... ang amoang gigamit sa among pagminyo kay mao naman gud ang naangdan namo nga mangayo bugay ang among ginikanan or musunod mi unsa paratakaran sa among tribo. (KII\_PA\_RQ2)*

The reason that it was still the same... the tradition that we have...now... that we use in marrying is because we are used to it, our parents asking for bugay or following the rules of the tribe.

Participant B indicated that they are raised to this in the same light. To follow their parents, to be wed as a woman with a husband to provide them a child is a duty they must adhere to. Somehow, the statement of participant B indicated that they follow the rule of the tribe, the tradition that, regardless of their affective states, they believe this to be customary, an indication that God has bestowed their blessing to the woman and the family. With a sigh of surrender, participant B said:

*Nagdako ko nga kani akong nahibal an. Sa pagpakasal kay ako lang gisunod ang tugon sa akong ginikana, nakasal nako, usa nako ka babaye nga adunay bana ug dapat nako siya na mahatagan ug anak. Nakuan pud ko nga kabalo ko nga naa ang Ginoo nga alang mugabay sa among pag-ipon. (KII\_PB\_RQ2)*

I grew up knowing this. In marriage I just followed my parents, I got married, I am already a woman who has a husband and I should bear him a child. I also know that God is there to guide our life together.

Similarly, participant D found herself highlighting the obligation of the members of the tribe to marry only within the tribe. The rigid adherence of Tagakaulo led the young generation of Tagakaulo women to see that other tribes, because they cannot offer Bugay, ought not to be married to them. It is not allowed, and they must adhere to it. Otherwise, they are to be married not according to the tribal belief.

Sadly, participants of this study shared their self-convincing statement of their need to follow through with their tribe's rigid adherence to their rituals. Adhering to their rituals and traditions in marriage causes others not to be married traditionally. Moreover, this stems greatly from the child's nurturance as they grow up—and in the Tagakaulo tribe, they raise generations to follow it strictly.

Another basis for conducting the traditional marriage rituals is because Tagakaulos believed that through this, they can receive the blessing of God, in marriage, as an individual, couple, and the tribe as a whole. More importantly, when you immerse in the community, it is essential to understand that the tribe is not Catholic. They have gods and goddesses in various forms, which is evident in their community, praying forms, and customs and traditions like their traditional marriage. This observation is backed by the findings that I have gathered during in-depth interviews, wherein participant B shared that the basis of doing the customary marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo Tribe is to abide by God's will and blessing on the marriage between two individuals.

Based on Participant B's statement, if the families involved in the marriage are not in unity, or the amount of bugay that was talked about is not fulfilled, the older Tagakaulo members associate this as warming, an indication that God does not allow the marriage of the individuals.

*Dili pag-uyon or di pagkasinabot sa duha kapamilya. Or diha kaha dili paghatag sa maong nasabutan nga bugay. Ingon sa katigulangan usa na sa mga pangkuan sa Ginoo nga dili gitugot ang kasal sa kanang duha ka-tawo. (KII\_PB\_RQ2)*

Misunderstanding between the families. Or not be able to give the agreed bugay. According to the elderly, this is because God does not allow marriage between the two persons.

In the same light, Participant D said that this is to be a way to see their life as a wife. For a woman involved in the marriage, the rituals are obligations that will make them know and be assured that their future is secured, because not only does the proven to them and their family that he can support them, but they saw it according to God's will.

*Tungod sa akong ginikanan? Kinanglang man gud to siya, ug sa akoa pud kay para Makita nako daan nga ang akong pagpuyo alang usa ka asawa sa usa ka bana na katungod sa ginoo. (KII\_PD\_RQ2)*

Because of my parents? It was needed, and for me, this would show me my life as a wife of a man as God wants it.

Congruent to that, Participant E mentioned that traditional marriage rituals strengthen marriage. As the elderly have mentioned this as God's way of blessing the family, as evident in their current situation, those who were married traditionally are living comfortably with their families. Participant E entails that this belief is good, however, marriage on this basis ends up with women simply becoming housewives and nothing more.

*Naga patibay siya. Sama sa katigulangan ingon sila kini kay nagapasbot nga ang among kasal kay tugot sa Ginoo. Wala man koy mabuhay pero maayo man pud ang among pagpuyo. Pero lagi, sama sa uban pagpuyo ang mag baye padayong balay ragud tig alaga sa pamilya. (KII\_PE\_RQ2)*

It strengthened (marriage). According to elderlies, this means that our marriage is according to God I could not do anything about it, but we are living well. But like I said, as other women stay at home to care for the family.)

Similarly, participant H said that the successful conduct of the rituals before the marriage is said to empower the families, as blessed by Gods, and the leaders of the tribe.

*Nagkuan sa ni nga gipagkusog sa among Ginoo ang among kasal uban sa among katigulangan ug katribo.*

*(This (indicated) that God strengthened our marriage along with the elderly in our tribe.) KII\_PH\_RQ2*

Again, these rituals are meant to ask for God for the lives of the man and woman. Also, it would indicate God's approval or disapproval of the marriage, and the persons involved.

*Pagrespeto along sa among mga tradisyon, pag-pangayo ug tumong sa kinabuhi sa Ginoo ug alang pud sa pagkabalo sa iyang pagtugot sa pag-usa sa duha ka tawo. (KII\_PH\_RQ2)*

Respect for our tradition, asking for purpose of life to God, and also to know about his say on the marriage of two individuals.

To appeal to God's good grace through marriage is an obligation that each member of the Tribe has to have a better and more secure life in the future. For women members of the Tribe, this is a sign they check and give high relevance because this becomes a foundation of their future. However, this does not necessarily indicate that men and women willingly partake in their marriages set by parents or older family members. Oftentimes, some rebel, which I also find to be true based on the notes I have collected throughout my immersion processes. Although the practices involve the man and woman, in terms of early marriages,

or marriage between an adult and a child, the man mandates the flow of the marriage and the wellbeing of the woman.

This is more evident in the proceeding with the marriage for the good of others, aside from themselves. Participant E shared that the traditional marriage rituals are rooted in the fact that this has been done for years by their parents, and this is what their generation has been raised to adhere to. Participant E shared that they abide by the marriage rituals to help their parents. As for the children, the Tribe believes that they must preserve the respect and name of the family and the Tribe through marrying based on their traditional marriage rituals.

*Mao naman gud ang naandan. Maayo ginabuhay sa among ginikanan ug mao pud nahibal an namo...anak raman mi kay inig buhaton namo na makahatag pud mi ug tabang sa among ginikanan ug para sa among tribo. Sama sa bugay ug sa pagpabilin sa among mga katrigo na maghiusa. (KII\_PE\_RQ2)*

This is what we grew up to. This is a food thing that our parents did and because this is what we know...we are just their children, when we do this, we help our parents through the bugay and for our tribe to remain in unity.

Participant F stated that practicing the rituals of the tribe would indicate that worldly challenges will be overcome by the man and the woman. Somehow, the rituals involved in the marriage are meant to strengthen and test the bond between the man and the woman, so that after successfully marrying one another, they become guided by the tribe, and their families to have a good family.

*Kung buhaton namo ni pasabot kay madugay ang pag-uban sa duha ka tawo, ang pagminyo sab aye ug laki tungod sa ritwals na among ginabuhay saamong tribo nakatuo kami nga magdugay ug masagubang nila ang kalibutanong pagsulay. (KII\_PF\_RQ2)*

If we do this it would mean that the relationship of a man and woman because of the rituals of our tribe will last because we believe that will overcome worldly challenges.

The Tagakaulo members of the tribe, both men and women, saw that successful marriage through the traditional means would suggest that they would become able and capable of overcoming challenges in their marriage. The rituals continue to foster because the tribe believes this to be good for the parties involved, including the tribe as a whole.

To sum up, this section presented the basis of the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo tribe. The tribe members continue to anchor the rituals on the belief that it ties the tribe together, their beliefs, faith, and their assurance for a future that is set to be experienced by the man and woman. Presented in Table 2 would be the tabular presentation of the data gathered during in-depth interventions, note that these are presented and discussed alongside the narratives of the researcher during her immersion.

Table 2  
 Traditional Marriage Rituals of the Tagakaulo Tribe

Major Themes	Core Ideas
<b>Rigid Ritual Adherence</b>	The tribe members are accustomed to the tradition of marriage.
	The tribe members are accustomed to the tradition of marriage.
<b>God's Provision</b>	The inability of the man to provide the bugay is taken as God's disapproval of the marriage.
	The marriage tradition is God's provision.
	The marriage is God's will.
	The traditional marriage is strengthened by God, the tribal elders, and the tribe members.
<b>Good for the Couple, the Families, And the Tribe</b>	The marriage and the bugay is one way to help the family of the woman.
	The marriage tradition is a means to ensure that unity remains in the tribe.
	The belief is that doing the rituals will bring about long-lasting marriage.

### Socio-Cultural Implications of Marriage Ritual of Tagakaulo Tribe

I believe that it is important to highlight the relevance of the practice for the Tagakaulos. However, there seems to be an underlying dejection behind its imposed responsibility to children, women, and elderlies. Another thing that the members of the tribe imparted to me was their experiences of cultural insensitivity toward others and the lack of freedom of the younger generations to choose their lifetime partner,

The effect varies. When I got the chance to interact with the elderly Tagakaulo members, they resonated with me their beliefs about their responsibility in ensuring that the younger generations must follow through with their rituals. Similar to their previous experiences, members of the tribe, particularly women of the tribe, must adhere to the rituals and practices. Somehow, some of those who were married early have grown accustomed to the rituals, and for participant H, the experience has influenced their view on life. During an in-depth interview, participant H shared that elderlies have indeed become accustomed to the culture and have accepted their roles and their situations, they said:

*Sa mga katigulangan...maayo man pasabot lang nga ginasunod gihapon namo sila, sa mga karaan nga pagminyoy. Kadalasan sa ilaha bata or tama lang kay gikasal na, siguro naapektuhan sila uy. Pero lagi kay tigulang na sila ug naagihan najud nila gidawat nalang nila alang nga makaapdyon sa kinabuhi. (KII\_PH\_RQ3)*

For the elder it is good this would mean that we are following them, those who previously got married. Most of them were kids or those considered at the right age are married, probably they are affected. But because they are affected and they have affected it they have accepted and live with it.

Meanwhile, for children, Participant H stated that children must have the freedom to enjoy childhood. Early marriages in some cases should not be considered as it deprives children of their childhood. Participant H felt pity towards the children who are removed from their chance to be a child.

*Dapat lang jud ni walaon na. Mga bata nga sayu ikasal man gud. Dili parehas sa laing tribo ba nga taas pa ug panahon ang mga bata nga mapadyon ilang gusto pagabuhaton sa ilang kinabuhi. Kining among tradisyon man gud usahay kay maluoy ko sa mga bata pa nga mahimong asawa wala na sila tyansa nga mahimong bata. (KII\_PH\_RQ3)*

This should be stopped. Children who are married early. Unlike other tribes who have a longer time for their children to pursue their goals in life. Our tradition sometimes, I just feel pity for the children who become wives, they have no chance to be a child.

On the other hand, participant E took notice of women who are left only to wait for the decision of their family and the man perform their duties before marriage, women are left only with an option to be a housewife. Participant E saw that the thoughts of helplessness because of this culture and tradition imprisons women in the houses to care only for their child, house, and their wife.

*Naga patibay siya. Sama sa katigulangan ingon sila kini kay nagapasbot nga ang among kasal kay tugot sa Ginoo. Wala man koy mabuhat pero maayo man pud ang among pagpuyo. Pero lagi, sama sa uban pagpuyo ang mag baye padayong balay ragud tig alaga sa pamilya. (KII\_PE\_RQ3)*

It strengthened (marriage). According to elderlies, this means that our marriage is according to God I could not do anything about it, but we are living well. But like I said, like others, women stay at home to care for the family.)

The practice of traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo has implications for different generations, including the elderly, who have accepted their faith and see this to be a way of cultural preservation. At multiple levels, the rituals associated with the marriage of the members of the tribe are more detrimental to the well-being of the members. Meanwhile, in terms of discussion of the rituals related to their traditional marriage rituals, the bribe services, or the giving of the bugay, early and arranged marriages have received criticisms from communities outside the tribe.

Further, within the tribe, I learned in a casual conversation with members of the tribe that the continuous practice and constant attempts to preserve the traditional marriage rituals of Tagakaulo are the roots of the unity and respect for one another among the tribe members. This anchored the marriages that lasted, and somehow, the rituals served as guides for the families that were made. This practice has implications for the tribe member's more profound respect and consideration of the tribe's customs and traditions.

*Ang natabang aning ritwal sa among pagpamimyo is kanang ang ginikanan sa matag-usa magrespetoanay unya kung magkasinabot jud ang managtiayon is magpabilin ang ilang gugma ug pagrespeto sa ilang tribo. (KII\_PA\_RQ3)*

The rituals of marriage help the family of the parties to respect one another for the married couples to be understanding to retain love and respect for the tribe.

Additionally, participant E recognized their own experiences as a way to manifest respect and consideration of the future of the tribe. To retain the peace that has allowed every member of the Tagakaulo tribe, participant E stated in a voice full of the assurance that whatever they have become in adherence to the customs and traditions of the tribe is to keep peace within it.

*Mao naman gud ang naandan. Maayo ginabuhay sa among ginikanan ug mao pud nahibal an namo...anak raman mi kay inig buhaton namo na makahatag pud mi ug tabang sa among ginikanan ug para sa among tribo. Sama sa bugay ug sa pagpabilin sa among mga katrigo na maghiusa. (KII\_PE\_RQ3)*

This is what we grew up to. This is a food thing that our parents did and because this is what we know...we are just their children, when we do this, we help our parents through the bugay and for our tribe to remain in unity.

The practice of the rituals of their traditional marriages, the members of the Tagakaulo tribe saw this as an experience that highly impacts how they value and give importance to the traditional ways of their tribe. They hope to retain peace and ultimately showcase their respect for their people, ancestry, and traditions.

Dejectedly, couples have also shared that because of their practice. However, they may not express their outward dislike of being married young, being engaged at a young age, or getting married to older men. These more youthful individuals have started to develop hopes to be with someone they value. They are deprived of their right to choose. As an adult, married and having experienced the rigidity of the tribe's culture, I heard about the experience of participant C. They shared that the traditional marriage rituals are unfortunate for the younger generations who have known the value of freedom and autonomy. As I was also expressing my observations about this particular instance, participant C shared their observations as well, they said:

*Siguro sa akong nabantayan kay nawad an sila ug katungod nga mupili ug ilang gusto pangasawahon. Mao man gud na kay makahuna huna naman gud sila kung naa sila gusto nga tawo. (KII\_PC\_RQ3)*

Probably what I noticed is they lost the right to choose their wife/husband. That's it because they can already think if they like someone.

Similarly, Participant D shared also indicated that young individuals are greatly affected by continuing the practice of their traditional marriage rituals. They are deprived of their right to choose. For women, they ought to know that the man must offer bugay, and the man must know about their duties for them to get married. Unless they understood its importance to the tribe, they are not allowed to marry any man who does not adhere to this ritual.

*They are affected jud uy, laliman ka nga bisan pa sa ingon ana nga edad kay dilli sila hatagan ug katungod nga mupili lang ug si kinsa aron ilang pakasalan. Alang sa mga baye dapat mahibalo sila nga ang laki alang nga muhatag ug bugay, ug ang laki pud dapat mahibalo nga dapat aduna silay bugay nga mahatag alang na makapakasal sa baye nga ilang gusto. (KII\_PD\_RQ3)*

*They are affected, even at their age, they have no right to choose the person they want to marry. For the women, they must know that the man should be able to give bugay, and for the man, they must know they must offer bugay to be married to the girl they want to marry.*

Additionally, Participant E stated that the socio-cultural implications of the marriage ritual of the Tagakaulo tribe are big. Those who follow the rules must strictly adhere to them. It is a test of respect that must be fulfilled for the tradition, the name of the family. These practices do not give them the ability to choose.

*Sa pagka karon dako jud ni siya ug impact uy. Kay sa uban wala na nagasunod pero sa uban pamilya sa among tribo kinahanglan jud musunod. Ang mga batan on sa gusto sa ginikanan. Ilabi na katong gusto ipasanglabi ang respeto along sa karaan nga tradisyon, ngalan sa pamilya ug uban pa. Dili sila mahatagan ug kabungahon sa pagpili sa ilang gusto nga ma-asawa. (KII\_PE\_RQ3)*

For now, it has a big impact. Others may no longer follow but families in our tribe necessitate young adults to follow their parents. Particularly those who want to speak of their respect for our old traditions and the name of their family. They are not given the freedom to choose the person they want to marry.

Participant E reminisced about their past and indicated that knowing how it was difficult for them, they believe that it is time to give the young individuals the right to choose their life partners. That is if it is bugay or none, marriage is their option nonetheless.

*Adunay uban maghisgot nga ipadayon alang sa tradisyon. Pero kung atong huna hunaon, kabalo naman ta kung unsa ta kasayu dati ug unsa kalisod ang magminyo ug sayu. Hatagan na siguro nato ug Karapatan ang mga batan on nga mamili ug ilang asawahon. Unya inig makahatag ug bugay edi maayo, ig dili, wala pud tay mabuhat. (KII\_PE\_RQ3)*

Others would mention continuing this as it is a tradition. But if we're to think about it we know how difficult it was to be early (married) and how difficult marriage was. We should give young adults the right to choose who they want to marry. If they can offer bugay then that's good, if they can't we cannot do anything about it.

The members of the tribe perceive the traditional marriage and the ritual associated with the practice to be most detrimental to the young generation. These young adults have realized their rights. This is a critical deciding factor that delimits their right to choose the person they would want to spend the rest of their lifetime. For one instance, a Kagawad who was one of the individuals who accompanied me during my immersion shared about members of the tribe leaving their houses, rebelling against their parents as they are against an arranged marriage or marriage during their early years of life.

Meanwhile, the Tagakaulos believe that the giving of bugay is part of their rituals as a form of respect and compensation to the woman's family. Less knowledgeable individuals impact how the Tagakaulo establishes relationships with other communities. To further understand this concept and my observations, I went back to my data found from in-depth interviews. I found confirmations about this unfortunate experience for the Tagakaulos. Participant B pondered their experience with other communities outside of their tribe. Most of the time, outside communities tackle their practice of giving bugay. To the tribe practice of bugay is part of the traditional marriage rituals of Tagakaulo. Within the tribe, they see this to be valuable to show respect to their tribe members and the woman's family. This, however, has implications because other tribes lack cultural sensitivity. They are unable to understand the value of bugay. Hence, it elicits insensitive remarks directed towards the adherents of the rituals and traditions, the Tagakaulo members.

*Ila ikasulti sa amoa usahay makaexperience mi nga ubos ilang paglantaw sa among tribo kay tungod gipabayran mi sa among ginikanan, ginapabugayan mi. Mao na akong makuan pud diri sa lain tribo ubos na ila paglantaw sa amoa. (KII\_PB\_RQ3)*

*I observed that other tribes, I experienced being belittled because they saw our tribe as being tribe by our parents, because of the bugay. That is what I observed other tribes think low of us.*

Similarly, participant D, although they seemed reluctant to share, they imparted that they have firsthand experienced cultural insensitivity by other people. The topic was once again centered on the giving bugay, one of the marriage rituals of the tribe.

*Naka-experience na jud ko ani... ana sila nga mubo daw kayo. Nga kwarta ra daw ang katapat sa amoa aron makasal mi dayon kay bisan kinsa. (KII\_PD\_RQ3)*

I experienced this, they told us that we are lowly. That facing us with money would make us marry just anyone.

In the same light, Participant F was perplexed by this misunderstanding. They also noticed this lack of cultural sensitivity, although not as directly spoken to as in participant D's experience. From their experience, people outside of their tribe, those who are not exposed to their culture, see that bugay is an act of selling women to people who have the money. This mindset they associate directly with the members of the tribe is demeaning.

*Dili man sa pagdumot or unsa ba diha...Ang akong nabantayan kay lahi jud ilang panglantaw sa amoa. Ilabi na sa panahon karon, inig makagawas ang balita nga nay ikasal sa amoang tribo kay lain sila ug pananaw. Pananaw nila maba kayo nga igo ra mi bayaran kay lagi nay bugay. (KII\_PF\_RQ3)*

Not to hold a grudge or whatever...What I noticed was that they think differently of us, particularly in today's time. When news comes out that one member of our tribe will be wed, they view us differently. They view us lowly thinking that we can be bought because of the bugay.

Additionally, participant B reluctantly shared as well that the opinion or baseline prejudice directed towards B'laan and their culture is centered on the giving of compensation or bugay as part of the traditional marriage ritual. The idea of outsiders is that it is the only basis of the rituals for a marriage between a man and woman to occur.

*Pan-aw guro nila nga ang bugay ra ang hinungdan nganong ginapadayon namo ang kani nga tradisyon sa among tribo.*

They probably view us to only value the bugay as the reason why we continue to practice this traditional marriage of our tribe.) KII\_PG\_RQ3

Cultural sensitivity for the immediate community members of the Tagakaulo is lacking, which is detrimental to their efforts to build relationships with other communities. Alarmingly, although there was no apparent and physical manifestation of these implications to the daily living of the tribe, even with the time that I had immersed in the community, I had barely opened a path of uncovering these implications with the help of the courageous members to describe and impart their experiences. This experience only strengthened my goal of completing and successfully presenting this paper to a broader audience.

## Summary

At the outset of this ethnographical study, my goal was to investigate and document the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo tribe. I immersed myself in the community and conducted in-depth interviews to gain confirmation and validation of my observations. I was able to compose my narratives and use their statements to affirm them.

Further, the investigation revealed four (4) essential rituals that members of the tribe must follow to be considered to marry traditionally in the tribe. The rituals include the panag-tawag, where the bribe services are discussed and given to the woman's family, then the giving of bugay, marriage within the tribe, and the responsibilities of the man that must be fulfilled.

On the other hand, I was also able to identify the basis for conducting the rituals, which generally involved the rigid adherence to practicing traditional marriage rituals in hopes that their God blesses them individually and the tribe as a whole. They also continue to practice this because it is believed to be good for the couples, or the man and woman involved, and their families.

Lastly, socio-cultural implications included its detrimental effects on the imposed roles of elderlies, women, and children. Also, younger generations are removed from their freedom to choose their life partners. Adding to that, because of a lack of knowledge and sensitivity, members of the tribe suffer degradation because the concept of the bribe services cannot resonate with the members of other communities, which is detrimental to the attempts of Tagakaulos to establish relationships with other communities.

## DISCUSSION

### Rituals to Fulfill to Enter Marriage

One of the significant rituals involves the panag-tawag. With the aid of the in-depth interviews, I understood the purpose of this ritual. The members of the tribe narrated that before the marriage of two individuals, families are gathered together. In the presence of their chieftain, the families of the two parties will gather in the same place to discuss the interest of the man in marrying the woman. During the gathering, the families of the man and woman will agree on the terminologies of the offering that will be offered to receive the hand of the woman. Also, the intentions of the families will be communicated openly, discuss plans and the future of the two individuals will be discussed. If the gathering is successful and the families are united in purpose, the Panag-tawag is completed.

The findings are congruent to Soompi's (2013) and Qian and Sayer's (2016) study, who suggested that among tribes, marriage among two individuals signifies marriage between families. The study revealed that the Tagakaulo tribe's practice of this panag-tawag is among those that give greater significance to the families involved rather than the man and woman involved in the marriage. As I have narrated, in a wedding, regardless of how the woman feels, if her family is eager to settle, and the man is determined to be wed to her, the marriage rituals will proceed. As evident in other cultures, the involvement of the families is meant to settle and ultimately create a solid ground to cement the relationship between families by watching and managing. Leading family meetings to ensure their children's future

and group (Minocher et al., 2019), practice does not highlight the personal feelings of the involved but the good for all.

Eventually, during the panag-tawag, an agreed amount of compensation was decided. As part of their rituals, the members of the tribe, the party of the man, must offer money or any form of offer that equates to the agreed amount during the panag-tawag. This is a form of compensation to the family of the woman, as well as a test to determine whether a man can prove their intentions towards the woman. This is also a symbol of respect for the woman's family, customary conduct that the tribe has long practiced. On the other hand, failure to provide and reach the agreed amount may even result in the impossibility of marriage occurring. Success, however, leads to marriage. This fits the documentation of Levesque (2018), who discussed that bugay plays a deciding factor in traditional marriages. In some cases, giving of bugay alone, to some tribes, parents allow their children to marry adults. Alarmingly, this practice, in the beliefs and values of some tribes does not weigh lighter than its large role in maintaining tribal welfare, and stronger tribal relations (Minocher et al., 2019).

Following this, I recognized the prominent role of men in the traditional marriage of Tagakaulo. For most of the part, rituals are associated with how the family of the man, and the man himself, can prove to perform his duties. One of their most significant duties as a critical deciding factor for marriage to occur is to prove to the woman's family that he is capable and able to perform their duties. For the Tagakaulos, the man must go to the woman's house and live with them for a designated time until the woman's family vouches that the man's intentions are pure and suitable for their daughter.

The findings could relate to traditional Chinese marriage in which the man, who is asking for the hand of the woman, must seek to prove their devotion to their in-laws (Huang, 2014). Another similar case is with traditional Korean weddings in which the man must travel to the woman's home and accomplish the rituals before they are allowed to marry the woman (Soompi, 2013). In similar cases, men generally make the effort to perform and successfully follow marriage rituals for a marriage to take place, however, that would not necessarily indicate that woman has no function in such a process.

Lastly, one of the significant rituals of the tribe that must be adhered to is the marriage within, the Tagakaulo tribe. As observed, members of the community saw this as of great relevance because members of the tribe have been raised with a degree of understanding that the rituals of their tribe are anchored on deeper ties with their identities. Also, if members of the tribe pursue to marry those who belong in other communities outside of their tribe, only a few could understand its purpose. This practice is congruent to the statement of Levesque (2018), who mentioned that Tagakaulo tribe members have, most of the time, preferred marriages between related families, particularly second cousin marriages. After marriage, the couple usually resides in the husband's community. Contrary to this, the same author mentioned that the younger generation would prefer living outside their communities to adhering to the traditional marriage rituals.

### **Rigidly Adhere to Rituals to be Blessed**

The investigation revealed that the Tagakaulo tribe has a rigid ritual adherence. To follow a rigid adherence to their traditional marriage rituals stemmed from their childhood, as the participants recognize that they were raised to it. Since then, they have witnessed the giving of compensations, its value, and how it affected their tribe members. To follow through with the traditional rituals is an indication that they are following the "rules" of their tribe. In addition, the responses most of the time focused on what the past generations have made, the inputs of the parents, and other external factors, but there was no mention of the feelings

or the person wants and needs of the members of the tribe. Also, marriage with other tribes is impossible if traditional marriage rituals are not adhered to.

This rigid belief could be stemmed the tribes deep-rooted belief system Salbang and Maslang (2010). Indicated that marriage is a vital community affair that integrates other cultural practices. This would imply that the Tagakaulo were among the tribes in the Philippines who have stood their ground successfully and were able to maintain a close link with their ancestral past (Puspitasari et al., 2019). This aspect is a distinctive identity of an indigenous community, as though they are living the same way as their ancestors from years ago (de Matos, 2018). In this case, the Tagakaulo adheres to their traditional marriage rituals rigidly.

Furthermore, the Tagakaulo tribe practices the rituals for their traditional marriage as they see it as a way for the Gods to communicate their blessing in the unity of the people and their families. As I have observed, the strict adherence to the rituals also stemmed from their belief that it results in more graces bestowed by their gods. Any form of disagreement, misunderstanding, and incapacity to provide the agreed compensation amount indicates that their Gods do not permit the marriage. The Tagakaulo tribe continues to practice and try to preserve their traditional marriage rituals because they based this on the belief that the results indicate the approval and disapproval of their Gods in the communion of families. Marriage demonstrates a high level of adherence to cultural values and family structures. The decision to marry and choose a mate is based on community and generational values rather than personal desires and needs (Puspitasari et al., 2019).

The observations and findings are congruent with Rothchild and Piya (2020). They mentioned that marriage is deemed one of the most significant rites of passage of its participants, both male and female, in many indigenous tribes. For an instinctive search for permanence, it is an act between man and woman. It is more than a family union and a vow of unity along patriarchal family lines with a deep theological, financial, and structural sense. This would support the idea of how the Tagakaulo tribe continues to practice the traditional marriage rituals, as it extends beyond the union of a man and woman to the tribe's unity. Similarly, the marriage of two Tagakaulo members could be compared to marriage in Korea (Qian, & Sayer, 2016), where the man and woman indicate or symbolize the union of two people but of the two families as well.

To practice and complete the traditional marriage rituals would mean that the married individuals have helped their parents. As a child to their parents, they see this to be a way to help their family and their tribe. Accordingly, this is good for the families involved and the tribe. It is believed that marriage rituals are continuously one because it seems to bring good for the man and woman involved, the families, and the unity of the tribe. Going back, the theory of symbolic interaction undermines that cultural significance and behaviors affect the interactions and attitudes of people (Smith, 2017). Hence, the practice of the marriage rituals of Tagakaulo is done because they believe it to be good for the involved tribe, the people, and their kinship.

### **Socio-Cultural Implications of Marriage Ritual of Tagakaulo Tribe**

Observations, supported by in-depth interviews, the findings brought into light the socio-cultural implications of the traditional marriage rituals of the tribe to its members. The practice of traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo has implications for different generations, including the elderly, who have accepted their faith and see this to be a way of cultural preservation. This is supported by the study of Lewis (2018), who indicated that preserving the culture is the role of elders in the cultural resilience of native communities.

Native elders serve as teachers, mentors, family members, wisdom bearers, traditional healers, and role models in a community. They preserve language through teachings, teach culture and traditions to youth, participate in tribal councils, and preserve traditional ways of governing communities (Lewis, 2018). Moreover, somehow, the exercise of the preceding generations is perceived by the elderlies as a legacy they have successfully taught and left. For children, to deprive them of enjoying their childhood, and for women to feel helpless. This is critical as Chandra-Mouli and Sadidiqi (2018) cited that the age gap between the male partner makes the child involved in the wedding at risk for domestic violence, marital rape, unemployment, and sexual infections like HIV/AIDS. This would indicate that somehow, even with the right to independent values and beliefs, Tagakaulo children who are forced to marry are negatively affected by this practice.

Furthermore, traditional marriage ceremonies attract difficulties that thrive and admonish their adverse effects on the people involved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2015) highlights the issue of child and/or forced marriage (Schief et al., 2018). According to a few studies, many Tagakaulo tribe children who are barely out of adolescence suffer emotionally from early marriage to a man who is not their choice (Levesque, 2018). Women with a low level of education and from low-income families are more likely to marry young (early marriage) (Ardi & Maizura, 2019).

Moreover, the practice of the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo tribe has positive implications for the tribe members. Doyle (2020) mentioned that every tribe is entitled to its customary laws and traditions. Perry (2017) defined culture as a set of common rules and conventions that are followed by community members and carried out in a way that is acceptable to all communities. (Silvester, 2020). Culture includes what a person thinks, how he acts and behaves, and something that one owns. From this, the practice of the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulos is considered excellent and beneficial for the tribe. Hence, the respect built within the tribe associated with their traditional values is because they come together to celebrate and manifest their culture. This relates to Potarca and Bernardi (2017), who said that educated or authoritative individuals use marriage to have an ethnic advantage over the lower-status spouse.

On the other hand, in choosing a lifetime partner, later generations of the Tagakaulo tribe have slowly ventured outside the area or community of their tribes. Because of the rigid adherence to rituals, including the intervention of parents, young generations lack the freedom to choose the person they want to spend their life with. This is because, as told by their chiefs, they cannot marry those who do not belong to their tribe and those who are not capable of providing for the bugay agreed upon. The socio-cultural implications of the marriage ritual of the Tagakaulo tribe include the deprivation of freedom to choose young individuals.

Further, the lack of freedom to choose a partner is not uncommon among other tribes, as arranged marriages are believed to strengthen tribal ties (Minocher et al., 2019). Further, Briner (2015) mentioned that indigenous people thrive on their own, living nomadic lifestyles. However, it cannot be denied that as time passes, even the members of the Tagakaulo tribe have begun to seek their right to choose. As they are beginning to go past their nomadic lifestyle, they start to question their customs, beliefs, and traditions—particularly in its nature of removing their freedom for various situations.

Among the many, the pressing implications of the practice to the Tagakaulo tribe are the prevalence of cultural insensitivity of the other communities. This, however, is not uncommon because previous studies have found that Indigenous peoples face several issues related to their status and contact with other cultural groups. Certain challenges are unique to particular groups; other challenges are usually faced Espiritu (2017) mentioned discrimination as one of these challenges. In terms of their practice of giving Bugay, other communities and tribes who do not understand the concept of bugay practice cultural

insensitivity that is demeaning to the members of the tribe. Because of the lack of knowledge and deeper understanding of Tagakaulo's customs and traditions, other individuals associate this with a form of materialism and then generalizes it to the whole community of the tribe. Despite societal perturbations, the Tagakaulo tribes remain to seek to preserve their customs and traditions (Doyle, 2020).

Indigenous peoples have stressed time and time again that any legislation aimed at protecting their data must be founded on their traditions (Heinämäki & Xanthaki, 2017). That is, cultural sensitivity must be manifested. This would indicate that the Tagakaulo tribe's practice of bugay should be judged according to their beliefs and not the idea of people selling and trading women and children for money. But evidently, the responses indicate a lack of cultural sensitivity received by the Tagakaulo tribe. Hence discrimination is directed at them by neighboring communities.

Finally, many Tagakaulo women have, over time, found pre-arranged marriage unfavorable to their interests and avoided the custom of lumad marriage (Cruz, 2018). These findings further suggest the varied implications of Tagakaulo practices for women who have grown up to realize their situations but are left to accept their faith. This may have implications for the findings of Adedokun et al. (2017) women who are wed early become the target of domestic mistreatment and neglect, and over time they abide and become subservient to the violence. It also calls out appropriate learning platforms to foster cultural sensitivity and information in our locality.

### **Implications for Practice**

Programs and interventions for minority groups in the country need to be more efficient in attending to the individual needs of the members of tribes, particularly those with contentious traditions involving critical populations. The traditions and customs and traditions unique to any tribe should be respected. However, reservations must be made to protect the critical populations involved.

On the issue of the removal of their right to exercise freedom of the members of the Tribe to choose their life partner, the National Commission of Indigenous People (NCIP), the counseling professionals, LGUs, possibly the Department of Social Welfare (DSWD) may create programs which may explore innovative approaches to equally retain respect to the traditions of the Tagakaulo tribe, while also aiming to let the people exercise their rights to choose. There is a need for external interventions, and the implications of this practice to the future generations, especially with the Tagakaulos, these agencies should take action.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) should take legal actions to provide the security and attention which the members of the Tagakaulo deserved. Particularly for those women and children who are subject to forced marriages. They may also work hand-in-hand with the Counselling Professionals and conduct psychological and awareness programs about fundamental human rights, including those which allow resilience and self-concept to be removed from their deep-cultural values that negatively impact their perceptions of freedom to choose. To remove any imposed psychological and emotional harm to those Tagakaulo members who have been subjected to the culture, DSWD and counselors may come together to address the issue.

On the issue of the practice's implications on a child's life, from a mother's perspective, this lack of importance in allowing the child to enjoy their childhood is disconcerting. This is the same with the fact that members rarely try to incorporate women's decisions, in most cases, on whether to pursue or not a marriage or the man with whom they will spend their life. There is an apparent lack of activities that empower women in the community. They should be allowed to speak on their behalf and exercise their freedom during the discussion of

marriage. They could be given livelihood lessons, strengthen the grasp of their talents in embroidery—allow them to explore their choices, and teach them to create career plans and scholarships for schools outside of their communities to further their horizons. Hopefully, through such activities, women of the Tagakaulo tribe will obtain the courage to speak in the discussion of marriage, pursue knowledge and career activities, and overcome being passive and abiding by established traditions to show respect and honor the Tribe, and their families.

Hopefully, this should foster deeper community ties of the Tagakaulo with people outside of their Tribe. In addition to that, there should be a close relationship between the Tribe and the counseling services of the locality to ensure the psychological well-being of the involved individuals are not put at risk, like the children and women.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Since this study was limited to the exploration and documentation of the Tagakaulo tribe's traditional marriage rituals, the following research is recommended:

First, future explorations may focus on conducting in-depth regard based on the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo tribe by delving deeper into their literature. I believe that the literature aspect for the explanation of this basis could be anchored on the records of the Tribe alone.

Second, to the local communities, LGU and the National Commission of Indigenous People—results impose these organizations to be more engaged with the Tagakaulo tribe. With their right to include their values and customs as an indigenous tribe, but to allow others to recognize and be knowledgeable more of the concepts that anchored their rituals. This could be a way to lessen discrimination and the cultural insensitivity of neighboring communities. Research on the lived experiences of those who have experienced early marriage is suggested.

Third, the varied impact of forced marriages on children, women, and the elderly must be given ample attention. This complicated issue could address and further discussed for potential studies presenting the psychological impact of the marriage rituals that the individuals have to follow and the external communities' perceptions about the Tribe. Comparative and ethnographical studies could be conducted to explore the psychological impact of the Tagakaulo's marriage rituals on the children, women, and elderly.

## **4. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In going through this research, I aimed to explore and document the practice of the traditional marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo tribe. As a social science teacher, I have garnered relevant insights from experience. Immersing myself in the culture of others will always be the best way for me to extend teachings to my students, as I can anchor it on my personal experiences.

Based on my narratives and observations supported by the conducted in-depth interviews revealed the rituals that involved the *panag-tawag* or gathering of both families, bribe services, men proving to the family of the women about their intentions, and the obligation to marry only within the tribe. The events and rituals that must occur and should be accomplished by both parties. However, based on the findings is clear that the traditional marriage rituals of the tribe have an adverse impact on the well-being of its members.

These rituals are unbendingly followed because the members of the Tribe have grown accustomed to its necessity. Adding to that, it is a way to receive their god's provision, blessing, and grace for a stronger relationship. This is continuously practiced because the

members believe that it is good for the couple, the families, and the Tribe over the course of years. Such beliefs reflect more deeply rooted views that have continued to influence and guide the practices of the Tagakaulo, particularly on pursuing and continuing their traditional marriages.

On the other hand, the practices have negative implications for the view of other people in the Tribe. From a socio-cultural perspective, it imposes a responsibility on children and women. It removes people from their right to choose their life partners. The rituals such as the bribe services are center cultural insensitivity of other tribes, which is detrimental to the relationship between the Tagakaulo tribe and other communities. These reflect the ambivalence of their marriage practice. Its positive effect highlights the strengthening of their kinship system, it promotes bond and unity among the tribe which will lessen cultural assimilation. On the other side, negative implications emerged.

As a teacher, it is my duty to teach the next generations relevant and timely information to equip them with the skills to thrive in the real world. In my journey towards understanding the marriage rituals of the Tagakaulo, I was reminded of why freedom is exercised by many while others are deprived. Traditions must be respected; however, it is important to note that tribes and beliefs could only thrive and continue because of their people. Further, during my immersion, my thoughts were quieted when I witnessed how much women and children could only follow through with what their families desired.

As a child, I had the most typical life as a daughter, sister, and friend to many, I had a good childhood experience. It was both joyful, and many interactions and experiences shaped how I am today. While I was in the community, I wondered how many of the women I was interacting with, had the same childhood as I have. The fact that some are married at young ages to their relatives, and someone much older than them, the responsibilities they have to carry as wives while they were supposed to be playing outside, is a thought unimaginable to me. Despite this, I tried as much as possible to objectively see their experiences through the lenses of their tribe's culture as it is my duty as well.

Then I came to realize that the childhood of those women could no longer be returned, but I can aim to do activities that would prevent such experiences be prevented and avoided for their daughters. As a teacher, I can spread awareness about women's empowerment, and rights to choose, and impart to my students that they are protected. Alongside those who advocate for the same interest as I do, we can influence the community. I teach children, and along with my colleagues, we can gather parents, to teach assertiveness when fighting for their rights, and to equip them with the skills to stand for what is right. Hopefully, one day, when they are standing on my feet, they would no longer wonder how childhood could have been better and their future much brighter if it were not for the force that influenced the decisions of their parents that silenced their voices.

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