

From Rural Roots to Urban Centers: The Transformation of Filipino Traditional Practices

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Abstract

This study explored the evolving landscape of Filipino traditional practices in the context of urbanization, modernization, and globalization. Drawing responses from 100 participants across urban and rural settings, the research examined factors influencing the transformation of traditions, perceptions of younger generations, and the adaptations of cultural practices in cities. Findings revealed that technology and media, globalization, and economic pressures are the most significant drivers of change, with weighted means exceeding 4.30. Younger respondents were perceived as less engaged with traditions, often viewing them as outdated, although schools and communities were acknowledged as vital in sustaining cultural participation. Urban adaptations included modifying celebrations to fit modern schedules, simplifying practices to conserve resources, and utilizing social media to reimagine cultural expressions. Despite these shifts, deeply rooted traditions, particularly religious rituals and traditional cuisine—remain resilient symbols of cultural identity. Respondents envisioned Filipino traditions as increasingly adapted and modernized, often blending with global influences while retaining their essence. The study concludes that Filipino traditions are not being lost but rather reinterpreted to remain relevant. Recommendations highlight the roles of education, community initiatives, technology, and policy in preserving cultural heritage for future generations.

Keywords: Cultural Adaptation, Filipino Traditions, Globalization, Heritage Preservation, Urbanization

1. Introduction

The Philippines is a nation deeply rooted in traditions that reflect its diverse cultural heritage and strong community values. For centuries, traditional practices have been nurtured within rural landscapes, where agricultural life, kinship ties, and indigenous knowledge systems shaped everyday living. However, as the country continues to experience rapid urbanization, these long-standing practices have undergone significant transformations. The migration of Filipinos from rural areas to bustling urban centers has not only altered the way traditions are preserved and transmitted but also reshaped their meanings within modern contexts. This shift highlights a dynamic cultural interplay: while some practices are retained and adapted to fit the fast-paced lifestyle of cities, others face the risk of decline as younger generations navigate new social environments and global influences. Rituals, celebrations, foodways, and communal activities that once thrived in provincial communities are now redefined within metropolitan settings, often merging with contemporary practices or being simplified for convenience. Exploring the journey “from rural roots to urban centers” offers valuable insights into how Filipino identity evolves through change, continuity, and adaptation. It underscores the resilience of cultural heritage and the need to critically examine how traditions survive, transform, or fade amid the forces of modernization, migration, and globalization.

1.1 Background of the study on Transformation of Filipino Traditional Practices

Filipino traditional practices have long been shaped by rural life, where strong family ties, shared labor, and community-centered values guided everyday living. Customs such as bayanihan, fiestas, and religious rituals were integral to village life and passed down through direct participation and shared experience. These traditions helped preserve cultural identity and strengthened social bonds within communities. With the rapid growth of urban centers, many Filipinos have moved away from rural areas in search of better opportunities. This shift has transformed how traditional practices are observed and understood. Urban lifestyles, modern technology, and changing social structures have altered or reduced communal traditions, while others have adapted to fit city life. Despite these changes, many Filipinos continue to uphold cultural

practices in modified forms, reflecting both continuity and change. This study examines how Filipino traditional practices have transformed from rural to urban settings, highlighting how culture adapts in response to modernization while remaining an essential part of Filipino identity.

1.2 Related Literature about the Rural Roots to Urban Centers

Del Castillo (2022) examines how Cordilleran Christian youth maintain and reinterpret rituals under disruptive conditions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. His study, *Re-imagining the Religious Beliefs and Cultural Practices of Indigenous Christian Youth* (Religions, 13(6), 539), highlights how youth negotiate rural and urban contexts, providing insights into intergenerational engagement with tradition and faith (Del Castillo, 2022). Building on this, Del Castillo et al. (2023) in *Religiosity among Indigenous Peoples: A Study of Cordilleran Youth in the Philippines* (Religions, 14(6), 751) conduct an empirical investigation revealing differences in religiosity and cultural practices between rural and urban youth, supporting place-based and intergenerational analyses of cultural preservation and adaptation (Del Castillo et al., 2023).

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO et al., 2021) provides an institutional perspective on *Urban Food Systems and the Pandemic: Assessing the Impact of COVID-19 on Food Systems and Adaptive Measures in Metro Manila*, documenting how pandemic disruptions altered food sourcing, sharing, and urban food practices. This report is particularly relevant to understanding how crises and urbanization reshape cultural foodways (FAO et al., 2021). Complementing this, Mwambi et al. (2023) in *Cost and Affordability of a Healthy Diet for Urban Populations in Thailand and the Philippines Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (BMC Public Health, 23, 1398) analyze household data to show how urban poverty and pandemic conditions affected the affordability of traditional diets, linking economic pressures to the evolution of food practices (Mwambi et al., 2023). Similarly, Angeles-Agdeppa et al. (2022) highlight national-level impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on household food security and nutrition in the Philippines, demonstrating how crises can disrupt daily cultural practices related to food (Angeles-Agdeppa et al., 2022).

Simon (2024), through the study *Enhancing Filipino Senior High School Students' Conceptual Understanding of Philippine Folk Dance Using the iSAYAW Web Application*, examines how educational technology can preserve and adapt traditional dance pedagogy in urban and school contexts, showing that digital platforms can sustain cultural practices while simplifying them for modern learners (Simon, 2024). This is further detailed in the iSAYAW chapter (*iSAYAW: Revolutionizing Philippine Folk Dance Education Through Mobile Learning*), which describes the development and evaluation of the mobile/web application for folk dance, highlighting how technology effectively transmits tradition in educational settings (Simon et al., 2024).

O'Meara (2024) provides a comparative perspective on marginalized urban populations in the Philippines, showing how communities reshape spaces and daily practices to sustain cultural life, emphasizing placemaking and urban adaptation in the preservation of traditions (O'Meara, 2024). In the context of foodways, Soriano, Dumlao, Ibañez, and Policar (2024) document the persistence of indigenous rice-based food processing methods in the Cagayan Valley region, demonstrating that traditional techniques remain resilient despite modernization pressures (Soriano et al., 2024). Salas and Piol-Salazar (2022) complement this perspective by exploring how Hanunuo millennials negotiate modernization and tradition, revealing the nuanced ways youth balance cultural heritage with modern influences (Salas & Piol-Salazar, 2022). Datu (2024), in *Students' Perceptions Regarding Food Preparation Practices in Local Universities in Makati Concessions*, investigates how urban university students perceive and engage with traditional versus modern food preparation methods. The study finds that students maintain an appreciation for cultural food practices while simultaneously adapting to faster, modern systems, highlighting the ongoing evolution of traditions in urban academic settings (Datu, 2024).

Finally, Echoes of Tradition (2025) investigates how digital platforms and globalization influence language, code-switching, and cultural practices in Iligan City, illustrating urban communities' ability to manage heritage alongside modern identity. Eslit (2024) further examines Filipino cultural identity in a globalized, post-pandemic context, highlighting the dynamic interplay of resilience, adaptation, and youth agency in maintaining and transforming traditions (Eslit, 2024).

1.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework on Rural Roots to Urban Centers

This study is guided by Cultural Change Theory and Modernization Theory, which explain how cultural practices evolve as societies respond to changing social and economic conditions. Cultural Change Theory views culture as dynamic, shaped by factors such as migration, interaction, and exposure to new ideas. In the Filipino context, the movement from rural communities to urban centers alters how traditional practices are performed, understood, and transmitted. Modernization Theory supports this perspective by explaining how urbanization, technological advancement, and modern lifestyles influence social behavior and values. As Filipinos adapt to city life, traditional practices may be modified, simplified, or expressed symbolically rather than practiced in their original rural forms. Guided by these theories, the conceptual framework of the study emphasizes that urbanization-related factors—such as rural-to-urban migration, modern work environments, and technological influence—affect the transformation of Filipino traditional practices. These influences shape changes in the form, meaning, and frequency of traditions, leading to adaptation rather than complete loss, and reflecting the continuing evolution of Filipino cultural identity in urban settings.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This is a mixed-methods research design to investigate how Filipino cultural traditions are preserved, adapted, and reshaped in the face of urbanization and globalization. The mixed-methods strategy was selected to capture both measurable patterns and rich contextual insights regarding cultural practices. In the first phase, the quantitative component was conducted using a structured survey with Likert-scale questions. This allowed the researchers to collect numerical data on respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and levels of engagement with traditions such as rituals, festivals, food preparation, and folk arts. The survey results provided a general overview of prevailing trends and patterns across diverse demographic groups. In the second phase, the qualitative component was implemented through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These methods were designed to probe deeper into themes identified in the survey, giving participants the opportunity to articulate personal experiences, intergenerational narratives, and the social contexts influencing their practices. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the mixed-methods design ensured complementarity and triangulation of findings. The quantitative data established breadth and generalizability, while the qualitative data contributed depth and interpretation. Together, these approaches allowed the study to generate a comprehensive account of how Filipino traditions evolve, persist, or transform within contemporary urban and global contexts.

2.2 Locale of the Study

This study is conducted in selected rural barangays and urban communities within Metro Manila, Philippines. The rural areas represent places where traditional Filipino practices are still part of daily life, such as farming activities, community cooperation, and family-centered customs. The urban areas include cities where many rural residents have migrated and where modern lifestyles are more common. These locations were chosen to better understand how Filipino traditions change when people move from rural areas to urban centers. By comparing both settings, the study shows how traditional practices are maintained, adjusted, or slowly changed in response to urban living.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study are individuals from selected rural and urban communities within Metro Manila, Philippines. They include adults who have lived in rural areas and those who are currently residing in urban centers, especially individuals who have experienced moving from rural to urban settings. The respondents were chosen because of their direct experience with Filipino traditional practices and how these practices have changed over time. Their experiences and perspectives provide important information in understanding how traditions are preserved, adapted, or changed as people move from rural areas to cities.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample of the study consists of selected individuals from both rural and urban communities located within Metro Manila, Philippines. These participants include adults who are familiar with Filipino traditional practices and who have either remained in rural areas or migrated to urban centers. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the respondents. This method allowed the researchers to choose participants who have direct experiences and knowledge relevant to the study. Individuals were selected based on their background, length of residence in their community, and exposure to traditional practices. This sampling procedure ensured that the respondents could provide meaningful and reliable information about the transformation of Filipino traditions from rural to urban settings.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study uses a researcher-made interview guide and questionnaire as the main research instruments. The questionnaire includes simple questions about the respondents' background and their experiences with Filipino traditional practices in both rural and urban settings. The interview guide contains open-ended questions that allow respondents to freely share their views, experiences, and observations about how these traditions are practiced and how they have changed over time. These instruments were designed to gather clear and honest responses and were written in simple language to ensure that the respondents could easily understand and answer the questions.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The research followed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods procedure. In the first phase, participants completed a structured survey administered through both online platforms and printed forms to ensure accessibility. Following the quantitative stage, a subset of respondents was invited to participate in follow-up interviews and focus group discussions, allowing the researchers to explore themes and nuances that emerged from the survey results.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

For the quantitative phase, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to summarize participants' responses. Inferential statistics, including correlation and comparative analysis, were applied to examine relationships between demographic variables and perceptions. For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, insights, and narratives from interview and focus group transcripts. The integration of both analyses allowed for triangulation, ensuring the findings reflected both statistical trends and lived experiences.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and given the option to withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms were used in transcripts and reports to protect identities. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Respondent Profile

3.1.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

Most respondents are young adults aged 18–27 (70%), followed by 28–37 (25%) and 38 and above (5%). This indicates that the study primarily reflects the perspectives of younger generations, highlighting modern views on cultural adaptation and heritage.

3.1.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents

Nearly balanced gender distribution, with 50% female, 48% male, and 2% preferring not to disclose their gender. This balance ensures diverse gender perspectives and reflects the study's inclusivity toward all respondents.

3.1.3 Current Residence of Respondents

Shows that 63% of respondents live in urban areas and 37% in rural areas. This suggests that participants have greater exposure to urban lifestyles, while still capturing valuable insights from rural residents, enabling comparisons between modern and traditional perspectives.

3.1.4 Civil Status of Respondents

Most respondents are single (58%), followed by married individuals (34%), widowed (5%), and separated/divorced (3%). This suggests that the sample is largely composed of young adults, whose views on traditions may differ from those in marital or older age groups, while still offering diverse perspectives shaped by varying life experiences.

3.1.5 Educational Attainment of Respondents

Most respondents are college undergraduates (41%), followed by college graduates (37%), high school graduates (12%), and postgraduate degree holders (10%). This indicates a predominantly well-educated group, whose exposure to higher education may shape balanced views on modernization and the preservation of traditional practices.

3.1.6 Employment Status of Respondents

Most respondents are students (38%), followed by full-time employees (27%), part-time workers (14%), unemployed individuals (11%), self-employed (8%), and others (2%). This suggests that the majority are in school or early in their careers, balancing modern influences with varying degrees of engagement in Filipino traditions.

3.2 Evolution of Filipino Traditional Practices

Respondents generally agree that Filipino traditional practices have significantly changed due to urbanization, with an overall weighted mean of 4.12. They strongly agree that traditions are being adapted to urban lifestyles (WM = 4.35) while still believing their essence remains intact (WM = 3.78). Respondents also agree that rural communities preserve traditions better (WM = 4.12). Overall, the findings suggest that modernization encourages adaptation while cultural preservation continues in varying contexts.

3.3 Factors Influencing Traditional Practices

Changes in Filipino traditional practices are mainly influenced by modernization and globalization, with an overall weighted mean of 4.23 (Very Important). Technology and media (WM = 4.45) rank as the top factor, followed by globalization (4.36), economic pressures (4.30), education (4.18), and urbanization (4.12). These results emphasize that digitalization and global exposure are key drivers of evolving cultural practices in the Philippines.

3.4 Perceptions of Younger Generations

Younger generations have mixed but generally positive views toward Filipino traditions, with an overall weighted mean of 4.16 (Agree). Respondents noted that urban youth are less engaged with traditions (WM = 4.08) and often view them as outdated (WM = 3.92). However, they strongly agreed that schools and communities play a key role in preserving cultural heritage (WM = 4.40). The reinterpretation of traditions to fit modern lifestyles (WM = 4.22) also highlights the youth's adaptability and evolving cultural identity.

3.5 Urban Adaptations of Cultural Practices

Urbanization drives the adaptation of Filipino traditions to modern lifestyles, with an overall weighted mean of 4.29 (Agree). Social media (WM = 4.45) and modernized food practices (WM = 4.35) are key influences, while celebrations are adjusted for urban constraints (WM = 4.28) and simplified for practicality (WM = 4.10). These changes ensure traditions remain relevant and accessible in city life.

3.6 Globalization and Cultural Identity

Globalization strongly shapes Filipino cultural identity, with an overall weighted mean of 4.32 (Strongly Agree). Respondents noted that it fosters a blend of traditional and modern practices (WM = 4.40) and redefines cultural identity to include global influences (WM = 4.36). While exposure to global trends can sometimes overshadow traditions (WM = 4.18), the findings highlight that globalization promotes both cultural adaptability and resilience.

3.7 Perceptions of Traditional Practices

3.7.1 Most Significant Traditional Practice Preserved in the Community

Religious rituals (28%) and traditional food preparation (26%) are the most preserved practices, reflecting their lasting cultural importance. Family gatherings and bayanihan (22%) also remain strong, emphasizing kinship and community spirit, while folk dances and courtship customs are less practiced, particularly in urban areas.

3.7.2 Challenges Hindering the Continuation of Filipino Traditions in Urban Settings

Busy urban lifestyles (25%) and the influence of technology and social media (20%) are the main challenges to sustaining traditions, followed by economic pressures (18%) and youth disinterest due to global trends (17%). These findings highlight how modernization and shifting generational values reshape cultural priorities.

3.7.3 Vision of Filipino Traditional Practices 10 Years from Now

Most respondents foresee Filipino traditions adapting to modern lifestyles (32%), while others expect a fusion with global influences (20%) or continued preservation across settings (18%). Meanwhile, 15% predict a decline, and another 15% anticipate a revival through education and cultural programs. Overall, the findings suggest that traditions remain valued but are continuously reinterpreted amid urbanization, globalization, and generational shifts.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The findings reveal that Filipino traditional practices are undergoing significant transformation influenced by modernization, migration, and globalization. While respondents acknowledged that urban lifestyles and technological advancements reshape traditions, they also emphasized that cultural identity continues to be preserved through adaptations. Younger generations, though sometimes disengaged, still recognize the relevance of traditions when these are reinterpreted to fit modern contexts. Among the factors studied, technology and media, globalization, and economic pressures were identified as the strongest drivers of change. Religious rituals and traditional foodways remain the most resilient cultural elements, signifying their deep-rooted place in Filipino identity. Ultimately, the results show that traditions are not disappearing but evolving, reflecting a dynamic blend of continuity and innovation.

It is recommended that Schools should integrate lessons and experiential activities that highlight Filipino traditions, ensuring cultural values are passed on to the younger generation. Local governments and organizations should support festivals, culinary fairs, and cultural programs that make traditions accessible and engaging in urban settings. Since media strongly influences youth, platforms like social media can be harnessed to promote traditions in creative, relatable ways. Policymakers may design heritage preservation programs that encourage both urban and rural communities to sustain practices despite modernization pressures. Families and peer groups should actively participate in cultural activities to foster appreciation among the youth. Encourage innovations that adapt traditions to modern lifestyles without losing their cultural essence, ensuring relevance for future generations.

These conclusions and recommendations collectively underscore the need for a balanced approach—valuing traditional practices while embracing necessary adaptations that align with contemporary Filipino life.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study was conducted in accordance with proper ethical standards. Participation of the respondents was voluntary, and they were clearly informed about the purpose of the study. Before collecting data, the respondents' consent was obtained, and they were given the freedom to decline or withdraw at any time. The privacy and confidentiality of the respondents were strictly respected. Personal information and responses were kept anonymous and used only for academic purposes. The study ensured that no physical, emotional, or social harm was caused to the participants throughout the research process.

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