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## Research Article

### Language, Culture, and Gender: The Role of Traditional Stories in the Acceptance of Transgender Individuals

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#### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the intersection of traditional storytelling, cultural heritage, and the societal acceptance of transgender individuals within the Philippine context. While historical narratives often dictate rigid gender binaries, this research explores how such stories can simultaneously act as barriers to and instruments for gender inclusivity. Through semi-structured interviews with eight transgender participants from Sta. Cruz, Zambales, the study identifies core thematic challenges, including religious discrimination, deep-seated superstitions regarding "bad luck," and the pervasive influence of gendered role performance. The findings suggest that while traditional narratives currently reinforce stereotyping and misinformation, they possess the latent power to reshape social values. By promoting inclusive storytelling and leveraging family support systems, society can transition from exclusionary traditions toward a framework of empathy, self-love, and genuine transgender integration.

**Keywords:** *Culture, Gender, Language, Short story, Traditional, Transgender*

#### Introduction

Traditional storytelling in the Philippines serves as a primary vehicle for cultural transmission, yet it often functions as a double-edged sword for the transgender community (p. 13). While these narratives provide a sense of heritage, they frequently institutionalize rigid gender binaries through "established traditions" and religious dogma (p. 7). This re-

search examines how language, culture, and inherited stories intersect to either marginalize or empower transgender Filipinos.

By centering the lived experiences of individuals in **Sta. Cruz, Zambales**, this study identifies the core thematic challenges—ranging from religious discrimination to folkloric superstitions—and explores how these traditional myths can be reframed into modern

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instruments of social equity and transgender integration (pp. 1, 4).

## Methods

### Research Design

This study employed a **Qualitative Methodology** to explore the lived experiences of transgender individuals without external manipulation (p. 3).

### Participants and Setting

The research focused on **eight (8) purposively selected transgender participants** from Sta. Cruz, Zambales, a community characterized by a diverse blend of ethnicities and religious beliefs (pp. 3-4).

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data was gathered through a multi-modal approach, utilizing **semi-structured in-person interviews and digital questionnaires** (p. 4).

- **Instrument:** A researcher-developed questionnaire focusing on "thoughts, feelings, and actions" served as the primary tool for data elicitation (p. 12).
- **Analysis:** Collected data was transcribed and categorized into recurring patterns such as "Cultural Narrative Challenges" and "Historical Superstitions" (p. 4).

### Ethical Considerations

All procedures adhered to the **Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173)**, ensuring participant consent and strict confidentiality throughout the research process (p. 4).

## Results

The thematic analysis of participant interviews revealed three dominant cultural factors impacting transgender acceptance:

1. **The Weight of Spiritual Dogma:** Participants identified the "Christian country" context as a primary barrier, where traditional narratives frame transgender identity as a "sin" (pp. 5, 7).

1. *Evidence (K1):* "The challenge we face is the difficulty of acceptance and discrimination... the view of transgender people is that it is a sin" (p. 5).

2. **Narratives of "Bad Luck":** Historical superstitions associate gender diversity with misfortune, directly leading to the denial of professional and social opportunities (p. 11).

1. *Evidence (K8):* "Some stories say transgender people can bring bad luck to a community, which is why they are denied opportunities and respect" (p. 11).

3. **The Role of Family Support:** Contrastingly, modern narratives of resilience and family acceptance serve as the primary facilitators of self-love and societal integration (pp. 12-13).

1. *Evidence (P3):* "The support of those close to you is important in shaping your perspective on other genders" (p. 13).

## Discussion

The findings illustrate that transgender acceptance in the Philippines is a narrative struggle. Traditional stories currently act as a source of **stereotyping and misinformation**, reinforcing a binary view of gender that marginalizes those who do not conform (pp. 6, 14).

However, the data suggest that these same "cultural scripts" are malleable. When families and communities provide **inclusive counter-narratives**, the "instrument of change" is activated, shifting the focus from superstition to empathy (pp. 13-14). The study concludes that while conservative views from religion remain a significant obstacle, progressive storytelling and the use of **inclusive language** are gradually expanding the societal definition of gender (pp. 11, 14).

## Conclusions

Traditional stories have played a significant role in the historical marginalization of transgender individuals in the Philippines (p. 13). However, these narratives can be repurposed as instruments of change if used more inclusively. Acceptance is an ongoing process that requires the integration of language, culture, and identity to drive society toward a more welcoming environment for all (p. 14).

## Recommendations

1. **Community Engagement:** Organize symposiums to replace "Bad Luck" myths with accurate life stories and gender knowledge.
2. **Media Representation:** Develop documentaries showcasing transgender resilience to provide sufficient knowledge and a broad understanding of transgender individuals.
3. **Institutional Support:** Ensure anti-discrimination policies are strictly enforced in schools and workplaces, moving beyond "policies on paper" to active protection.

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