

The Encounter of Mangupa Cultural Values and the Modern Healthcare Service Approach in Transcendental Communication

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ABSTRACT *Mangupa* is a traditional Mandailing ritual practice imbued with profound spiritual and social dimensions, serving as a form of transcendental communication that connects individuals to their community and a higher spiritual realm. In the context of contemporary mental health services, this practice encounters complex dynamics. This study adopts a phenomenological approach to explore the subjective experiences of indigenous practitioners, mental health professionals, and patients in interpreting *Mangupa* as part of the psychosocial recovery process. The findings reveal that this ritual fosters therapeutic trust, provides emotional support, and offers a meaningful space for spiritual recovery. However, the integration of *Mangupa* into clinical settings is often constrained by administrative limitations and dominant biomedical standards. This study emphasizes the importance of fostering dialogical spaces between cultural practices and modern medical approaches not to preserve traditional essence per se, but to generate new, contextually dynamic meanings. Accordingly, the encounter between these two paradigms illustrates the potential for a transformative shift toward a more inclusive, participatory, and culturally grounded mental health service.

KEYWORDS *Cultural Integration; Mangupa; Mental Health; Mandailing Tradition. Transcendental Communication.*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health remains a pressing concern within Indonesia's healthcare system. The 2024 National Health Profile Report published by the Ministry of Health indicates a rising prevalence of mental health disorders, with 7.3% of individuals aged 15 and above experiencing emotional mental disorders, and schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders affecting approximately 8 per 1,000 households (Ministry of Health, Republic of Indonesia, 2024). These data highlight the magnitude of mental health challenges requiring not only medical attention but also culturally responsive

interventions. The latest update from the Mental Health Information System (SIKJ) 2024 further reports a significant increase in mental health service utilization, yet many facilities continue to operate with limited capacity to address patients' diverse sociocultural backgrounds.

Such misalignments between healthcare provision and community needs underscore the limitations of a biomedical-centric paradigm that often overlooks spiritual and cultural aspects of healing. The World Health Organization (2024) underscores the importance of culturally grounded and community-



integrated approaches to mental health, especially in plural societies such as Indonesia.

Cultural sensitivity in the context of mental health is an important element that must be considered in psychosocial services, especially in a multicultural society like Indonesia. Mental health is not only influenced by psychological and medical factors, but also by the cultural and social context in which the individual is located. One of the important traditions in Mandailing culture is *Mangupa*, which functions not only as a cultural ritual, but also has deep spiritual and social dimensions (Lubis et al., 2024; Pane, 2022; Pane et al., 2020). *Mangupa*, with the various values contained within it, has the potential to provide a significant influence on mental health recovery in the Mandailing community (Ardi et al., 2023). Although this ritual is highly valued in Mandailing culture, the main challenge is how to integrate this tradition in the context of mental health services based on scientific and clinical approaches (Wondie & Abawa, 2019; Nasution, 2022).

Local cultural traditions are often marginalized within the framework of more modern mental health practices, which tend to focus on individualistic and evidence-based approaches (Lestari et al., 2021; Siregar et al., 2023; Panggabean & Fajri, 2024). Meanwhile, communities that place importance on cultural and spiritual practices often feel that existing mental health services are less sensitive to local values (Lestari et al., 2021; Dwyer, 2019; Goodyear et al., 2022; Gordon, 2020). This shows the paradox between the need for

an evidence-based approach and the desire to maintain cultural values in the healing process (Ali, 2021; Damanik et al., 2022; Purba, 2022; Situmorang et al., 2024; Tami, 2022). This is where the importance of transcendental communication that involves spiritual and cultural dimensions to bridge these two worlds lies (Saintot & Lehtonen, 2024).

Transcendental communication in the context of mental health refers to the ways in which cultural and spiritual practices can be used to connect individuals with their communities, as well as with broader transcendent dimensions (Chu et al., 2024; Nam et al., 2024; Saintot & Lehtonen, 2024). In research conducted by (Saintot & Lehtonen, 2024), It was found that this kind of communication approach can strengthen patients' relationship with themselves, their community, and their spirituality. This allows them to cope with mental disorders in a more holistic and culturally appropriate way. In this regard, *Mangupa* has great potential to serve as a transcendental communication tool that connects individuals with their spiritual power and community in the context of mental healing (Long, 2020; Nasution et al., 2021).

Previous studies have shown that a culturally based approach to mental health can increase the effectiveness of therapy, especially for communities that strongly value traditions and spiritual values. For example, in the context of traditional Japanese medicine (Noda, 2009), shows that therapy that combines traditional elements with conventional

medical approaches can produce better results in the treatment of anxiety. The same thing also applies in Indonesian culture, especially in the Batak Mandailing culture, where traditional values such as *Mangupa* can have a positive effect on mental health (Hennilawati et al., 2022).

In addition, research by (Wondie & Abawa, 2019) shows that in the context of global mental health, there is often a tension between Western-driven mental health practices and local practices that are more rooted in local culture and spirituality. This tension, while challenging, also presents an opportunity to create more inclusive models of mental health care that acknowledge and value cultural diversity. It is therefore important to explore and adapt cultural practices such as *Mangupa* within the broader framework of mental health services, ensuring that these approaches serve not only to address clinical symptoms, but also support overall psychosocial recovery (Ndagijimana, 2022).

In the Indonesian context, many communities still rely on cultural values and traditions in dealing with their mental health issues. This can be seen in various traditional ceremonies that involve spiritual aspects, such as in *Mangupa* in Mandailing, which functions not only as a social ritual but also as a way to unite individuals with their community and spiritual world (Pane et al., 2020). However, recognition of the role of culture in mental health is still minimal, although there is some research that is starting to point towards the development of mental

health care models based on local values (Tami, 2022).

One of the main challenges in integrating *Mangupa* into mental health services is the fundamental difference between evidence-based approaches that emphasize scientific methods and more subjective and interpretive cultural approaches. Research by (Perez-Alvaro & Boswell, 2025) suggests that a more holistic and community-based approach can help ease these tensions, emphasizing the importance of community involvement in the healing process. *Mangupa* can thus be an important element in building a more inclusive and culturally based mental health model.

In this context, it is important to develop training and awareness for mental health practitioners to make them more sensitive to local cultural values, including *Mangupa*. For example, research by (Guillory & North, 2022) on community-based mental health education programs in the US suggests that involving local communities in mental health care can enhance the effectiveness of therapy and recovery. The same can be applied to the Indonesian context, where collaboration between mental health practitioners and traditional leaders can enrich existing treatment approaches (Siregar et al., 2022).

The use of transcendental communication in mental health practice allows for the integration of scientific approaches with cultural practices, which in turn can create services that are more responsive to patient needs. In this case, *Mangupa* is not only a traditional ritual, but also a form of communication that facilitates the relationship between patients and their spiritual world. Thus, this approach offers a new

model in mental health services that are more culturally sensitive and more holistic (Bassi, 2012; Fleishman, 2014; Liem, 2019; Lyon et al., 2013; Tietjen, 2023; Wongpakaran et al., 2023).

The biggest challenge is how to ensure that traditions like *Mangupa* can remain relevant in a modern context without losing their essence (Wiyanarti & Fathimah, 2024). Reminds that in the process of integrating tradition into the mental health system, there needs to be a balance between maintaining traditional values and accommodating the needs of modern society that is increasingly exposed to more technological and evidence-based medical approaches. Therefore, culturally based approaches such as *Mangupa* need to be translated into a more contemporary mental health framework without reducing its meaning and impact in society.

This study aims to explore the lived experiences and conscious awareness of informants in constructing the meaning of *Mangupa* as a cultural healing practice within the dynamics of mental health care in the Mandailing community. The research emphasizes how individuals perceive, interpret, and reflect upon *Mangupa* as part of their subjective understanding of healing and well-being.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach based on phenomenology to explore the subject's experience related to *Mangupa* and its role in mental health. The phenomenological approach allows researchers to understand the individual's subjective experience of the phenomenon being studied, including the transcendental values contained in *Mangupa* (Nassehi et al., 2024). By focusing on the subject's experience, this study aims

to explore the deep meanings resulting from the interaction between the *Mangupa* ritual, cultural values, and the mental health recovery process (Wondie & Abawa, 2019). This method is suitable because it allows for a rich and contextual analysis of cultural practices that are symbolic and spiritual in nature (Perez-Alvaro & Boswell, 2025).

The research participants involved three main groups: Mandailing traditional practitioners, who have a deep understanding of *Mangupa*; mental health workers, who represent a modern clinical approach; and patients, both those who have been involved in the *Mangupa* ritual and those who are familiar with the tradition. The involvement of participants with diverse backgrounds allows for the collection of diverse and comprehensive data (Ardi et al., 2023; Guillory & North, 2022). Participant selection was conducted purposively to ensure that all relevant perspectives, both from cultural and clinical perspectives, were represented (Lubis et al., 2024).

Data collection was conducted using two main methods: semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were designed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and understandings of transcendental values in *Mangupa*, as well as the challenges in integrating them into mental health services. This approach provided the researcher with the flexibility to explore the topic in depth while adhering to established guidelines (Efendi et al., 2020). In addition, participant observation was conducted during the implementation of the *Mangupa* ritual to understand the cultural context and the

transcendental communication processes involved (Ndagijimana, 2022).

Observations were made by directly following the implementation of *Mangupa*, noting the symbolic, verbal, and non-verbal elements in the ritual. This allowed researchers to see how transcendental communication occurs in practice and how these elements affect the psychological and social recovery process of participants (Leavy, 2022). During the interviews, questions were directed to explore participants' experiences regarding the role of *Mangupa* in creating spiritual, social and emotional harmony, as well as the challenges they faced in integrating this practice with modern clinical services (Mills, 2019).

The data obtained were analyzed using critical thematic analysis. This analysis involved identifying key themes that emerged from interviews and observations, such as transcendental values in *Mangupa*, conflicts between cultural values and clinical protocols, and potential integration in mental health services. This technique allowed the researcher to systematically organize the data and relate the findings to the theoretical framework used, including transcendental communication (Nassehi et al., 2024). A critical approach is used to evaluate the relevance of cultural practices in the context of modern mental health services and identify strategies to address integration challenges (Wiyanarti & Fathimah, 2024).

This study refers to the theory of transcendental communication which emphasizes the importance of spiritual and cultural dimensions in interactions between individuals. This theory is used to analyze how *Mangupa* functions as a communication

medium that connects individuals with their community and spiritual dimensions. This approach is relevant to explain how cultural values can provide emotional and spiritual support, while also answering the challenges that arise from the conflict between local traditions and modern clinical approaches (Munro, 2021; Ndagijimana, 2022). This method provides a solid framework for exploring the relationship between culture and mental health, with a focus on how *Mangupa* can serve as a transcendental communication model that supports holistic and culturally based mental health recovery.

DISCUSSION

Mangupa as a Medium of Transcendental Communication

Transcendental communication offers a critical mediating space between community-based healing traditions and modern scientific health care systems. Rather than serving solely as a symbolic or spiritual expression, transcendental communication facilitates a dialogical interaction between individuals, communities, and their existential realities. In the context of *Mangupa*, transcendental communication does not merely reinforce traditional meanings, but also enables reinterpretation and contextual adaptation. This dynamic communicative process becomes a vital entry point for reconciling ritual-based healing practices with the evidence-based orientation of biomedical health services. Through this approach, healing is not perceived as a purely physiological matter but as a multidimensional process shaped by spiritual, social, and cultural relationships.

Mangupa, as a cultural practice, embodies a form of local agency capable of negotiating with dominant medical paradigms. It should not be understood as a static or essentialized tradition that rigidly resists transformation. On the contrary, field data reveal that *Mangupa* can undergo reinterpretation and selective adaptation, particularly when it engages with clinical contexts. Certain symbolic elements within the ritual have already been modified or recontextualized by practitioners and communities to align with contemporary health narratives, without diminishing its cultural significance. Simultaneously, some elements of biomedical practice, such as therapeutic communication and psychosocial counseling, have shown openness to incorporating patients' cultural backgrounds, reflecting a shift away from rigid positivism toward more constructivist frameworks.

The intersection between *Mangupa* and modern health care thus represents a process of mutual transformation toward inclusive and culturally responsive services. Transcendental communication functions as the interpretive bridge where both traditions previously seen as incompatible begin to engage in mutual dialogue and co-construction of meaning. *Mangupa* moves from an essentialist position toward a constructivist cultural role, while modern medical practices begin to accommodate the lived cultural experiences of patients. The outcome is not merely a hybrid model of health care but a constructivist paradigm that embraces diversity, reflexivity, and contextual understanding offering a more holistic and human-centered approach to mental health care in plural societies.

Mangupa is a Mandailing traditional ritual that is full of transcendental values, which connects individuals not only with their community, but also with a higher spiritual dimension (Pane, 2022). In practice, *Mangupa* serves as a medium that strengthens an individual's awareness of the existence of ancestors, family, and God. This ritual provides a space for individuals to feel accepted, supported, and blessed by their community, creating a deep and calming sense of connection. This connection is not only social, but also spiritual, which is often an important element in supporting mental well-being.

The *Mangupa* process begins with preparations involving various symbolic elements, such as the traditional foods served in the ritual (Amri, 2022). This food not only serves as a symbol of respect for ancestors, but also as a medium of prayer and hope. In the context of transcendental communication, each element used in *Mangupa* has its own meaning that serves to bridge the physical and spiritual worlds (Siregar et al., 2022).

Pabagas Boru

This meaning refers to the recovery or strengthening of someone who is experiencing difficulties, both physically and spiritually. In *Mangupa*, Pabagas Boru symbolizes that the blessed individual will gain new strength to face challenges.

Upa-upa

Part of *Mangupa* that means prayer for blessings and grace. The act of touching food such as rice or chicken to an individual's body is called Upah-Upah, which spiritually

connects the individual to the ancestors and the Almighty.

Dalihan na Tolu

The customary structure that is the foundation of *Mangupa*, which means the balance of relations between the three main pillars in Mandailing life: family, society, and spirituality. *Dalihan Na Tolu* makes *Mangupa* a ritual that is not only individual, but also collective.

Marbona Mangalap

This concept reflects an effort to invite blessings from ancestors and God in every phase of life. In *Mangupa*, *Mangalap Marbona* is the core of prayer that connects individuals with the spiritual dimension.

Harajaon

Refers to honor and blessings. In *Mangupa*, *Harajaon* is often the main goal, namely restoring the honor of someone who is facing problems or trials.

Hasangapon

Meaning the glory or honor given by the community to the individual. In *Mangupa*, the presence of the extended family and community reflects the value of *Hasangapon*, where this ritual becomes a collective moment to strengthen the social and spiritual position of the individual.

Partondion

In *Mangupa*, *Partondion* is present through prayers that strengthen the individual's relationship with God and ancestors, creating inner peace.

Paingoton

Mangupa is often used as a moment to remind individuals about the importance of maintaining relationships with ancestors, family, and the Almighty.

Pature Hutana

An expression that means reorganizing one's life. In the context of *Mangupa*, this ritual is a means to start a new life with spiritual blessing and support.

Siriaon

In *Mangupa*, the meaning of *Siriaon* is seen in the atmosphere of togetherness and emotional support that the community provides to individuals.

Mangupa also places individuals in a strong circle of social support. The presence of extended family and community in this ritual creates a calming atmosphere of collectivism. In this atmosphere, individuals not only feel supported, but also appreciated and recognized. These values provide significant emotional support, which often becomes a source of strength for individuals in facing various life challenges.

As expressed by Mandailing traditional figures, *Mangupa* reminds individuals that they are never alone, because there are always ancestors, family, and God who accompany them. This shows that *Mangupa* plays an important role in building a deep sense of connection, creating emotional and spiritual security. In the context of mental health, this ritual provides a strong foundation to support the patient's emotional balance.

Observation findings reveal distinct patterns in the integration of *Mangupa*

within mental health healing contexts. During several ritual sessions observed in the Mandailing community, it was noted that Mangupa not only served as a symbolic practice but also functioned as a space for emotional release, communal affirmation, and spiritual grounding. Patients undergoing psychological distress were accompanied by extended family members, creating an environment rich in empathy and collective engagement. The use of traditional offerings, chants, and symbolic gestures during the ritual contributed to a calming effect on the participants. In some observed cases, individuals reported feelings of tranquility, renewed hope, and reconnection with ancestral values shortly after the ritual was performed indicating a psychosocial dimension that is rarely addressed in clinical interventions.

Observations also highlighted the tensions and negotiations between ritual

practices and biomedical protocols. In clinical settings, several patients and their families expressed a desire for the inclusion of Mangupa alongside standard therapy, though institutional structures often limited this integration. Health practitioners occasionally allowed symbolic gestures (such as verbal blessings or abbreviated rituals) to be incorporated informally before counseling sessions, especially in culturally sensitive contexts. These small adaptations, though not formally recognized within clinical guidelines, illustrate how the lived cultural consciousness of both patients and practitioners continues to influence therapeutic spaces. The data suggest that even within formal treatment environments, elements of transcendental communication persist through embodied cultural expressions, underscoring the need for more inclusive and dialogical frameworks in mental health service delivery.

Table 1. Research Results

Aspect	Interview Quotes	Interview Source
The Relationship Between the Individual and Community and Spirituality	"Mangupa is not just a ritual, but also our way of reminding someone that they are never alone. There are ancestors, there is family, and there is the Almighty who is always with them."	Mandailing traditional figures
Patient Emotional Support	"When the Mangupa ritual was performed, I felt like there was new energy flowing within me. The support of my family and the prayers given made me feel stronger."	Patients who follow Mangupa
Conflict of Collectivist Values with Individual Approach	"In the counseling room, our focus is on the individual and how they view their problems. But in a tradition like Mangupa, the focus is more on the community and how they help the individual."	Mental health counselor
The Need for Scientific Evidence	"Mangupa is good for the community, but we often struggle to explain its effectiveness in a scientific framework. Patients and their families often ask for this ritual, but we also have to think about existing clinical protocols."	Medical practitioner
Harmony In Therapy	"After Mangupa, I felt more trust in my doctor. The ritual was like opening the door for me to believe in the healing process."	Patients undergoing clinical therapy
Tensions in Clinical Application	"In a hospital setting, it is difficult for us to accommodate rituals like Mangupa because it is a long process and involves many people. It is not something that is easy to implement in a medical setting."	Doctors at mental health facilities

Sources : Analysis Author

The data presented in Table 1 illustrates interview findings from four distinct informants, each offering a unique perspective on the *Mangupa* ritual, particularly in the context of emotional support and mental health. As expressed by a Mandailing traditional leader, *Mangupa* is not merely a ceremonial rite but a profound expression of the relationship between the individual, the community, and the spiritual realm. The statement affirms that within Mandailing culture, individuals are never perceived as facing life's challenges alone; rather, they are surrounded by a web of spiritual and social support. This underscores that local traditions provide not only material or physical support but also deeply spiritual and psychological reinforcement.

This view is substantiated by a testimony from a patient who underwent the *Mangupa* ritual, describing a renewed sense of energy and strength following the ritual, particularly due to the prayers and presence of family members. This reflects the potential psychological benefits derived from the symbolic and social dimensions of the ritual. Emotional support is not limited to verbal encouragement but emerges from the collective presence and acknowledgment of the patient's identity and worth, reinforcing familial bonds and existential affirmation.

A tension arises between the collectivist approach inherent in *Mangupa* and the individual-centered model prevalent in modern psychological counseling. A mental health counselor highlighted that clinical practice tends to focus on the individual and their internalized narratives, whereas *Mangupa* emphasizes communal

involvement in healing processes. This tension opens an important discourse on how traditional collectivist practices can be harmonized with modern individual-based approaches without compromising the strengths of either paradigm.

A medical practitioner noted a significant challenge in aligning cultural practices like *Mangupa* with the requirements of scientific evidence. While patients and their families often request the ritual, healthcare providers are bound by clinical protocols that demand evidence-based justification. This highlights an urgent need to bridge traditional practices and scientific standards, allowing for more holistic and culturally responsive healthcare services that honor patient backgrounds and values.

The data reveals a complex dynamic in integrating traditional cultural practices such as *Mangupa* into contemporary healthcare settings. On one hand, there is strong recognition of the spiritual and communal values embedded in Mandailing culture; on the other hand, healthcare professionals face institutional constraints in validating such practices. Thus, further research is essential to empirically assess the psychosocial effects of *Mangupa*, so that cultural approaches are not only normatively respected but also formally acknowledged within health systems.

The Paradox between Tradition and Modernity in Mental Health

The paradox between tradition and modernity in mental health is often evident in the attempt to integrate cultural rituals such as *Mangupa* into the modern health system. The *Mangupa* ritual, which originates from the collectivist tradition of Mandailing, often

clashes with the individual approach that is at the heart of modern clinical counseling. In the context of Mandailing tradition, Dalihan Na Tolu, as a social system that emphasizes collective balance and responsibility, reflects the importance of community in supporting individuals (Lubis et al., 2024). This is in contrast to the clinical approach which focuses on the individual's experience and perspective in dealing with their psychological problems (Wondie & Abawa, 2019).

This conflict is further compounded by the differing views between traditional practitioners and mental health workers. Traditional practitioners often emphasize the spiritual and community strengths reflected in *Mangupa*, while clinical counselors tend to rely on a more measured, evidence-based approach. As one mental health counselor put it, "Our focus is on the individual, whereas in a tradition like *Mangupa*, the focus is more on the community." This suggests a significant paradigmatic difference between tradition and modernity.

In addition, the tension between customary practices and the need for scientific evidence is a major challenge

in implementing *Mangupa* in clinical settings. In the Mandailing tradition, the effectiveness of *Mangupa* is not measured through quantitative data but through the spiritual and emotional experiences of the individuals and communities involved (Amri, 2022). However, the evidence-based practice approach in modern mental health requires empirical data to support each intervention. Medical practitioners stated, "We often struggle to explain the effectiveness of *Mangupa* in a scientific framework".

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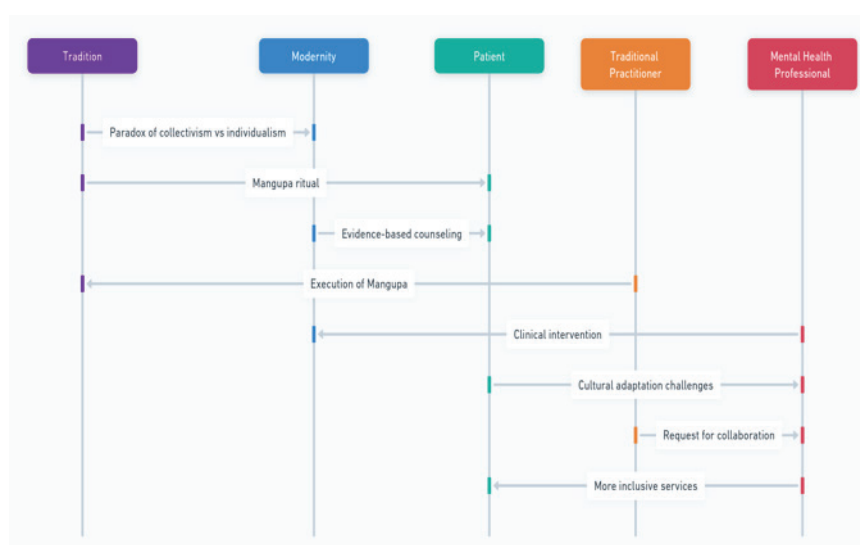


Figure 1. Paradox Between Tradition and Modernity in Mental Health

Sources : Analysis Author With Whimsical

The alignment between *Mangupa* and clinical therapy can be found in the core values that both share, such as emotional support, recovery, and strengthening the patient's self-confidence. In an interview with a patient, she stated, "After *Mangupa*, I feel more confident in my doctor." This suggests that *Mangupa* can be a gateway to building a deeper therapeutic relationship between patients and medical personnel.

Implementation of *Mangupa* in clinical settings faces structural and administrative challenges. Doctors in mental health facilities have stated that the *Mangupa* process, which involves many people and takes a long time, is difficult to implement in hospitals. These challenges reflect the need to adapt the ritual to a modern context without compromising its traditional essence.

One strategy to address this conflict is collaboration between indigenous practitioners and mental health workers. This collaboration can create a more inclusive approach, where *Mangupa* is used as a complement to modern medical therapy. Indigenous leaders emphasize, "We just want this tradition to be accepted as part of the healing process." This collaborative approach has also proven effective in other communities, as reported by (Dudgeon et al., 2024) in the integration of indigenous practices with mental health in Australia.

Cultural training for mental health workers is also an important step in bridging this gap. By understanding the cultural context of patients, mental health counselors can develop strategies that are more adaptive and sensitive to their needs (Yusuf et al. 2019). The counselors interviewed emphasized, "If

we are trained to understand the culture of patients, we can be better at bridging their needs with mental health services."

Integrating *Mangupa* into modern mental health services could be of great benefit, especially in creating a more holistic approach. The ritual offers a spiritual and emotional dimension that is often under-represented in modern clinical therapies. This is in line with the findings (Mercer, 2015), which suggests that community-based and spiritual approaches can improve therapy outcomes.

By bridging tradition and modernity, *Mangupa* can not only support individuals in mental recovery but also strengthen the social and spiritual cohesion of the Mandailing community. This approach is not only relevant to the local community but can also be a model for the integration of other cultural traditions in global mental health services. This reflects that traditions such as *Mangupa* have an important place in addressing mental health challenges in the modern era.

Harmony and Tension in the Implementation of *Mangupa*

The harmony and tension in the application of *Mangupa* can be analyzed through the perspective of tradition and modern medical needs, taking into account transcendental communication theory and cultural approaches to mental health (Nst, 2023). *Mangupa*, as a medium of communication, bridges the physical and spiritual worlds through complex symbolism. The ritual involves collective prayers that create a sense of individual connectedness with ancestors and divine

powers, providing an emotional and spiritual dimension often missing from conventional medical therapies.

In a clinical context, the application of *Mangupa* faces major challenges due to its collectivism-based nature, in contrast to the individualistic focus in modern therapy (Daulay, 2021). Mandailing tradition places the community as the center of emotional support for individuals, while medical therapy often prioritizes patient autonomy as a primary principle. This creates a paradigmatic gap that is difficult to overcome without adaptation and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Mangupa also often considered inappropriate for clinical protocols due to the difficulty of empirically measuring the effectiveness of rituals (Wahyuni, 2021). Medical practitioners face pressure to meet evidence-based standards, which often overrides the spiritual and social values of *Mangupa*. However, patient experiences show that this ritual has significant positive effects, such as increased optimism and self-confidence. This underscores the need for a holistic approach that respects cultural aspects.

The harmony between *Mangupa* and modern therapy can be found in the way this ritual builds therapeutic trust (Ritonga & Dongoran, 2024). Patients who undergo *Mangupa* often report better relationships with healthcare providers after receiving spiritual support from family. The symbolism in this ritual creates a sense of openness that helps the overall healing process. This suggests that *Mangupa* can be used to strengthen

therapeutic relationships in mental health services.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is a potential solution to integrate *Mangupa* into clinical therapy. Indigenous practitioners and health professionals can work together to create a complementary approach, where traditional rituals are used as supporting elements in medical therapy. This collaboration allows *Mangupa* to become a tool to bridge the cultural gap in mental health services.

Cultural training for medical personnel is also needed to increase their understanding of the values in *Mangupa* (Harahap & Dalimunthe, 2022). With a better understanding, health care providers can provide services that are more inclusive and sensitive to the cultural needs of patients. In addition, this training can improve the ability of health care providers to integrate collectivist values into the individualistic approach that is usually used in clinical therapy.

Mangupa as a complement to medical therapy offers the opportunity to create a more holistic approach. This ritual not only helps patients in the emotional aspect but also strengthens the spiritual dimension that is often less considered in medical therapy. This approach emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the patient's cultural needs in the healing process.

Adapting *Mangupa* to a modern medical framework requires adjustments to maintain its traditional essence. These adjustments include modifying the duration and scale of the ritual to better suit clinical demands,

without reducing its symbolic value. This approach allows *Mangupa* to remain relevant as part of modern mental health services.

Mangupa reflects the great potential to address the tension between tradition and modernity in mental health services. By maintaining its transcendental elements, this ritual can be a tool to bridge the gap between cultural and scientific paradigms. This integration not only supports individual healing but also strengthens social and spiritual relationships within the Mandailing community.

Through cross-disciplinary collaboration and the development of cultural training, *Mangupa* can serve as a model for a more inclusive and contextual approach to mental health. This model reflects the importance of respecting local traditions while meeting global standards in health care, creating a balance between tradition and modernity that supports holistic healing.

Transcendental communication theory emphasizes the spiritual dimension and profound meaning in human interactions, surpassing ordinary verbal and non-verbal communication. In the context of *Mangupa*, this communication is evident in the symbolism of the ritual, involving prayers, traditional foods, and community participation. These elements serve not only as physical communication media but also as a means of conveying spiritual values that strengthen the relationship between individuals, the community, and the divine. The *Mangupa* ritual reflects how this theory is applied through cultural practices that act as a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds.

Transcendental communication in *Mangupa* also highlights the importance of collective relationships as a way to achieve emotional and mental balance. According to this theory, human relationships are not merely interpersonal interactions but also touch on a higher spiritual realm. The presence of family and community in *Mangupa* provides a strong emotional foundation, demonstrating that mental recovery involves not only the individual but also social support. This process aligns with the concept of transcendental communication, which emphasizes harmony and universal connectedness.

The tension between tradition and modernity can be analyzed through this theory. Transcendental communication in *Mangupa* often clashes with individualistic approaches in modern therapy, which tend to overlook the dimensions of collectivism and spirituality. This theory illustrates how ritual-based communication, like *Mangupa*, can create harmony in addressing cultural values and medical approaches. In clinical contexts, *Mangupa's* transcendental dimension offers a space to strengthen therapeutic relationships by incorporating cultural and spiritual elements.

The *Mangupa* ritual demonstrates how transcendental communication can enrich mental recovery processes. According to this theory, the meaning embedded in symbolic actions such as prayers and *upah-upah* (symbolic blessings) becomes more significant than explicit messages. These symbols create emotional and spiritual connections that not only strengthen patients individually but also link them to their community and ancestors. This transcendental element is *Mangupa's*

advantage, which is difficult to replicate through conventional medical approaches.

Integrating transcendental communication into mental health services offers a more inclusive and holistic model. In the context of *Mangupa*, spiritual and social values are integral to the healing process. This theory underscores that communication is not merely about delivering messages but also about creating experiences that enrich emotional and spiritual relationships. Thus, *Mangupa* functions as a medium to connect cultural and spiritual dimensions with modern healthcare practices, fostering harmony between tradition and science.

CONCLUSION

This study has successfully revealed the subjective experiences and conscious awareness of informants in interpreting *Mangupa* as part of healing practices within mental health care services in the Mandailing community. Through a phenomenological approach, the findings demonstrate that *Mangupa* is not merely perceived as a traditional ritual, but rather as a form of transcendental communication that fosters spiritual and social connections between individuals, families, communities, and the divine. This dimension contributes significantly to psychosocial recovery, particularly in communities where collectivist and spiritual values remain central to well-being.

The results also indicate that *Mangupa* possesses the capacity to serve as a form of local agency capable of negotiating with modern medical systems. Rather than being a static or essentialist tradition, *Mangupa* is shown to be adaptive and responsive to

contextual shifts. Conversely, biomedical approaches often rooted in positivism have demonstrated a degree of openness toward constructivist perspectives, especially when responding to patients from culturally diverse backgrounds. The encounter between these two systems has created a transformative space that allows for more flexible, contextual, and participatory health care practices.

This interaction illustrates the vital role of transcendental communication as a conceptual medium for bridging traditional healing practices and modern, evidence-based health care approaches. Transcendental communication in this context is not confined to spiritual expression alone, but functions as a paradigm through which meaning is co-constructed and transformed in healing processes. A constructivist paradigm thus serves as a foundational framework to understand how healing meanings are reconstructed through symbolic interaction between cultural actors and professional health service providers.

The conceptual contribution of this study lies in the theorization of transcendental communication as an epistemological and practical bridge between community-based and scientifically driven approaches to mental health care. In this regard, the research offers a novel perspective on the development of inclusive, culturally responsive, and dialogically grounded mental health services. Such theoretical insight is expected to provide a foundation for future cross-cultural studies and to inform policy design in fostering more humanistic and contextually sensitive health care systems in Indonesia.

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