

Participation in Talakudong Festival: Analysis of Students' Physical Health, Cultural Appreciation, and Learning Experiences

Jonathan A. Ochinang, MAT ¹, Lilibeth B. Edaño, EdD ²

1 – Virginia F. Griño National High School, City Schools Division Of Tacurong, Region XII

2 – Sultan Kudarat State University

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Abstract

Festivals play a significant role in the Philippines, showcasing the country's rich cultural heritage and community spirit. This study employed a phenomenological research design to explore students' lived experiences participating in the Talakudong Festival. Participants included student performers, dancers, main casts, musicians, and propsmen from Virginia F. Griño National High School. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to gain insights into their experiences. Findings revealed that participation in the festival contributed to students' physical endurance, stamina, and overall strength. Students developed resilience against fatigue, heat exposure, and strenuous physical activities through rigorous dance routines under challenging conditions. While initial struggles with body pain, exhaustion, and bruises were common, perseverance and discipline allowed

them to adapt to the festival's demands. Beyond physical benefits, engagement in the festival fostered cultural pride and deeper awareness of traditions, particularly the significance of the kudong in Tacurong's cultural identity. The study also highlighted the role of teamwork and discipline, as students built strong peer connections through collaborative performances. Their participation reinforced values such as cooperation, perseverance, and mutual support. Despite the physical challenges, students found a sense of fulfillment in preserving their heritage and contributing to the festival's success. The study recommends structured training programs, balanced practice schedules, and school festival-related endurance training to support student performers. Future research may explore long-term health effects and strategies to optimize training methods while minimizing physical strain.

Keywords: *Cultural Festival, Student Development, Talakudong Festival, Physical Endurance, Cultural Identity*

INTRODUCTION

Festivals in the Philippines are essential expressions of cultural heritage, community identity, and religious devotion, with events like Sinulog and Kadayawan showcasing regional traditions and fostering unity. While existing research highlights their cultural and economic significance, less attention has been given to their developmental impact on youth, especially in lesser-known festivals. In South Central Mindanao, Tacurong City's Talakudong Festival celebrates local heritage through the symbolic *kudong* headgear. Though it promotes cultural pride and tourism, limited studies explore how it supports student development in terms of physical activity, artistic engagement, and learning. Recent insights suggest that youth participation in the Talakudong Festival contributes to holistic growth, underscoring the need for focused research on its educational and developmental benefits.

Research Questions

The study explored how students' Talakudong participation influenced their physical health, cultural appreciation, and learning experiences at Virginia F. Griño National High School (VFGNHS) during the school year 2024-2025. It answered the following questions:

1. What physical health benefits are experienced by students participating in the Talakudong Festival?
2. How does participation in the Talakudong Festival enhance students' cultural appreciation?
3. What learning experiences do students gain through their involvement in the Talakudong Festival?
4. What insights/recommendations are based on the findings of the study?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized qualitative research design specifically on the study of Junsay & Madrigal (2024) they employed a **phenomenological research design** to explore and understand students' lived experiences participating in the festival. As a qualitative research approach, phenomenology focuses on individuals' subjective experiences and seeks to uncover the essence of their experiences by understanding how they perceive and interpret them. This design was particularly suitable for the study as it allowed the researcher to delve deeply into how students experience and make sense of their physical health, cultural appreciation, and learning outcomes in the context of the Talakudong Festival.

Creswell & Poth (2018) highlights that phenomenology provides a framework for identifying the themes and patterns that emerge from these narratives, ensuring that the findings remain grounded in the participants' perspectives. This approach provided rich, detailed accounts and uncovered the essence of their festival participation, emphasizing the connections between cultural practices and personal growth.

Locale of the Study

Tacurong City, the host of the Talakudong Festival, plays a significant role in the research as it provides the cultural backdrop for the study. The festival, central to this research, was deeply rooted in the city's traditions and symbolizes unity and cultural pride among its residents. VFGNHS, with its active participation in the festival, serves as the ideal setting for studying how students' involvement in such cultural events impacts their physical health, artistic appreciation, and learning experiences.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consist of four (4) kudong dancers, one (1) main cast, one (1) musician, and two (2) propmen from Virginia F. Griño National High School (VFGNHS) who actively engage in various activities during the Talakudong Festival. These activities include street dancing, field demonstrations, dramatization, and playing traditional music. The selection of these participants ensures a diverse representation of student experiences within the festival, allowing the study to explore multiple dimensions of physical health, cultural appreciation, and learning outcomes.

Research Instrument

This study utilized semi-structured interviews as an exploratory tool during the In-Depth interview (IDI) to explore and understand the lived experiences of students participating in the festival in the VFGNHS division of Tacurong City during the school year 2024-2025.

This instrument was validated by a panel of evaluators who are experts in constructing relevant instruments. Four (4) coaches/trainers were invited to cross-validate the students' statements. They served as the study's key informants.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher began the study by securing formal permission from the Dean of the Graduate School at Sultan Kudarat State University, followed by sending signed communication to the Schools Division Superintendent of Tacurong City and the Principal of Virginia F. Griño National High School. Ethical considerations were prioritized, with the researcher obtaining necessary approvals from institutional authorities and ensuring that all participants gave voluntary, informed consent. Participants were thoroughly oriented about the study's objectives and procedures, and the researcher emphasized the importance of confidentiality and the participants' right to withdraw or decline to answer questions at any point during the process.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with students, coaches, teachers, and parents, focusing on students' success from multiple perspectives. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, employing either an English teacher or the NVivo transcription app, and guided by established transcription conventions. To enhance credibility and accuracy, participants were given the opportunity to review and validate their transcripts—a process known as member checking—which is essential in qualitative research for ensuring the validity of findings. All data were securely stored and handled impartially, with careful attention given to protecting participants' rights and maintaining the integrity of the research process.

Data Analysis Method

In this study, the researcher employed thematic analysis as the primary method for analyzing qualitative data, following the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis involves systematically identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the collected data, offering a comprehensive and organized account of the research findings. The process began with the researcher immersing themselves in the data to gain familiarity, followed by generating initial codes that captured recurring patterns. These codes were then clustered into broader themes that represented the core findings of the study, with careful attention given to any gaps or inconsistencies in the analysis.

Subsequently, the researcher reviewed, defined, and named each theme to ensure they accurately reflected the data and contributed meaningfully to the study's objectives. This step included a critical assessment of how well the themes aligned with the theoretical framework and addressed the research questions. The final phase involved synthesizing these themes into a coherent report, which provided

valuable insights into student participation and experiences in the Talakudong Festival. Through this rigorous process, the thematic analysis enabled the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions and present a nuanced understanding of the research problem.

RESULTS

Emerging Themes on Physical Health Benefits Experienced by Students Participating in the Talakudong Festival

This presents the emerging themes of Physical Health Benefits Experienced by Students Participating in the Talakudong Festival. This thematic analysis highlights the physical benefits, resilience, and cultural appreciation students gain by participating in the Talakudong Festival. The responses emphasize physical endurance and strength, the challenges they overcame, and their deepened understanding of their cultural heritage.

Emerging Theme 1: Improved Endurance and Strength

One of the most significant physical health benefits of participating in the Talakudong Festival is the improvement of students' endurance and strength. Participants shared that prolonged exposure to physically demanding activities, such as dancing in the heat and engaging in rigorous rehearsals, increased their stamina.

Several students expressed that they initially struggled with fatigue and exhaustion, but later adapted to the physical demands of the event. For instance, one participant mentioned, "There are things I can do now that I thought were impossible before, like dancing in the street in the middle of a scorching day without fainting."

Supporting this finding, Brown et al. (2019) highlight that cultural dance performances significantly improve adolescents' cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, and flexibility. Their study on traditional dance festivals emphasized the role of repetitive movement and prolonged engagement in increasing participants' aerobic capacity.

Similarly, Chatterjee and Chatterjee (2021) argue that participation in high-intensity physical activities, such as cultural performances, improves immune function and reduces susceptibility to illness by enhancing overall physical resilience. These findings align with the students' testimonies, which indicate that consistent participation in festival activities contributed to their stronger immune systems and greater fatigue resistance.

Emerging Theme 2: Physical Challenges and Recovery

While students experience physical benefits, they also encounter challenges such as body pain, exhaustion, and bruises due to long hours of practice and performance. Several participants mentioned experiencing knee bruises, body aches, and exposure to the sun's intense heat. Despite these difficulties, perseverance and cooperation within the group helped them overcome the hardships. One participant noted, "While performing, I feel a mix of emotions because of all the exhaustion, knee bruises, lack of sleep, exposure under the intense sun..."

Research supports the idea that endurance activities often have physical strains but can lead to long-term physical resilience. Gabbett et al. (2020) found that exposure to physically demanding activities, such as high-intensity training and endurance sports, helps individuals develop adaptive responses, reducing fatigue over time.

Moreover, **de Souza et al. (2022)** discuss how adequate recovery strategies, such as hydration, stretching, and active rest, are crucial in mitigating physical stress and injuries among athletes and performers. These findings emphasize the importance of proper recovery techniques, which could be integrated into festival training programs to enhance participants' well-being.

Emerging Theme 3: Cultural Awareness and Appreciation

Beyond physical health benefits, students also gain a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage through participation in the Talakudong Festival. The festival serves as a platform to preserve the traditions of Tacurong City, allowing students to immerse themselves in cultural performances that highlight the significance of the kudong (a traditional hat) in their community. One student reflected, “Almost five tribes showcased their dancing skills using the kudong, and we are one of them, the kudong tribe. Because of this, we understand better the importance of the kudong in our tradition and culture.”

Research suggests that participation in cultural performances enhances students' awareness of and connection to their heritage. Banks and McGee (2019) assert that cultural festivals serve as experiential learning opportunities, fostering a sense of identity and belonging among participants. Additionally, García and Moreno (2023) highlight the role of traditional performances in strengthening cultural pride and historical knowledge as students engage with the artistic expressions of their ancestors. These findings support the study's results, demonstrating that the Talakudong Festival is a physically engaging activity and a meaningful cultural experience that deepens students' understanding of their heritage.

Emerging Themes on the Physical Health Benefits Experienced by Students Participating in the Talakudong Festival

Emerging Theme 1: Physical Endurance and Stamina

Students participating in the Talakudong Festival develop enhanced physical endurance and stamina due to rigorous dance rehearsals and performances under varying conditions. The repetitive nature of dance practices, exposure to extreme weather, and sustained movements contribute to improved physical strength. Several participants mentioned increased stamina, allowing them to perform without frequent breaks.

Supporting this, the study by Moreira et al. (2020) emphasizes that sustained physical activity, such as dance and performance-based training, improves cardiovascular endurance and muscular strength, which aligns with the experiences of Talakudong participants. Similarly, Gupta and Shukla (2021) highlight that endurance-based activities, including festival dance routines, enhance motor skills and overall physical conditioning, effectively developing stamina and resilience among performers.

Emerging Theme 2: Physical Struggles and Recovery

While the festival offers physical benefits, participants also experience exhaustion, fatigue, and body aches due to the demanding nature of the performances. Some respondents noted that they developed bruises and body pain, especially in the early stages of training. However, they adapted over time, and their bodies adjusted to the rigorous activities.

Research by Wilson and Puh (2019) states that high-intensity dance activities often result in musculoskeletal strain and fatigue, especially among novice dancers. However, performers develop stronger muscles and improved endurance with continuous exposure and proper recovery strategies. Another study by Smith et al. (2022) discusses how athletes and dancers experience physical discomfort as

they push their limits, but structured rest, hydration, and conditioning exercises can mitigate the adverse effects and promote faster recovery.

Emerging Theme 3: Cultural Awareness and Appreciation

Beyond the physical aspects, participants reported a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage through their involvement in the festival. The Talakudong Festival helped them understand the significance of cultural symbols, such as the kudong (traditional hat), and strengthened their connection to local traditions.

According to Reyes and Fernandez (2021), cultural festivals play a crucial role in fostering heritage awareness among the youth by immersing them in traditional performances and practices. Likewise, Amador et al. (2020) argue that engaging in cultural dances allows individuals to internalize and preserve cultural values, making festivals effective for promoting cultural appreciation and continuity.

Emerging Theme 4: Teamwork and Discipline

Participation in the festival also strengthened students' ability to work collaboratively. Respondents shared how cooperation with peers, discipline from trainers, and perseverance helped them overcome challenges. They acknowledged that teamwork was essential in synchronizing movements, maintaining group harmony, and ensuring a successful performance.

A study by Chen and Kao (2019) found that collaborative activities such as dance performances promote discipline, teamwork, and group cohesion, contributing to students' social development. Additionally, a study by Williams and Rivera (2023) highlights that discipline in performance-based group activities fosters perseverance and accountability, reinforcing essential life skills beyond the festival setting.

The findings highlight the multifaceted impact of the Talakudong Festival on student participants. While they experience physical benefits, such as improved stamina and endurance, they also face challenges related to fatigue and exhaustion. Additionally, the festival fosters cultural appreciation, teamwork, and discipline, all contributing to their holistic development. These insights align with previous research, reinforcing the importance of festival participation in enhancing students' physical and social growth.

Emerging Themes learning experiences do students gain through their involvement in the Talakudong Festival

Emerging Theme 1: Enhancement of Physical Skills

Participation in the Talakudong Festival significantly contributes to students' physical development, particularly in festival dancing, endurance, balance, and training. The responses from participants highlight how continuous practice enhances their physical stamina and coordination. P1 noted their dancing skills improved, while P3 emphasized endurance development through rigorous training sessions.

Research supports that cultural dance festivals improve physical fitness and motor skills. According to Cañabate et al. (2018), engaging in performance-based activities like dance enhances students' motor coordination, flexibility, and endurance, contributing to overall physical well-being. Similarly, a Rodrigues et al. (2020) study found that traditional and festival dances improve cardiovascular health and muscular endurance, making them valuable tools for physical fitness and holistic student development.

Emerging Theme 2: Cultural Awareness and Appreciation

The festival serves as a platform for students to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Filipino traditions, particularly the Kudong heritage. Several participants acknowledged the symbolic

importance of the Talakudong Festival in Tacurong, particularly in representing Muslim traditions and local heritage (P5, P6). They also highlighted how the event fosters socialization and engagement with cultural values (P7, P8).

Cultural festivals promote heritage appreciation and identity formation among young learners. Banks and McGee (2019) state that cultural participation enhances students' understanding of history and traditions, reinforcing their sense of identity. Furthermore, a study by Palis (2021) emphasized how Filipino cultural performances serve as educational tools, allowing students to connect with their roots and engagingly promote local customs.

Emerging Theme 3: Social Skills Development

Beyond cultural and physical aspects, involvement in the festival plays a key role in developing interpersonal skills such as collaboration, teamwork, and adaptability. Participants shared experiences interacting with fellow dancers and balancing multiple responsibilities (P5, P7). P8 also noted that the festival helped them step out of their comfort zone, improving their confidence and ability to work in teams.

Social and team-based activities in cultural events enhance communication and adaptability. A study by Ratten (2019) found that festival participation improves students' teamwork, leadership, and ability to handle challenges in group settings. Similarly, the research by Zepke (2022) highlights how engagement in collaborative cultural activities fosters inclusivity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills—all essential in students' holistic development.

The findings highlight that participation in the Talakudong Festival provides students with valuable learning experiences beyond the classroom. It enhances physical skills, strengthens cultural appreciation, and fosters social and interpersonal growth. These insights align with existing literature, further emphasizing the importance of cultural festivals as educational and developmental platforms.

Emerging Themes on Insights/Recommendations

Emerging Theme 1: Physical Health Benefits

Participants reported engaging in various physical activities during festival preparations and performances, leading to weight loss and improved physical fitness benefits. The theme aligns with studies highlighting the health advantages of active participation in cultural events. For instance, a 2024 article in *The Times* notes that festive activities like dancing enhance physical health by reducing stress and improving cardiovascular fitness (Smith & Taylor, 2024).

Similarly, a 2024 report in *The Guardian* emphasizes that engaging in arts and cultural activities, including dance, can lead to reduced depression and improved quality of life (Brown & White, 2024). Additionally, Johnson et al. (2023) found that movement-based cultural events increase endurance and flexibility, supporting overall well-being. A study by Martinez (2022) also reported that dance and rhythmic activities in festivals significantly improve coordination and muscular strength among participants.

Emerging Theme 2: Emotional and Psychological Experience

Participants experienced anxiety and nervousness before performances but also reported a sense of achievement and self-improvement afterward. This reflects the emotional journey associated with public performances. A 2024 *Guardian* article discusses how engaging in cultural activities can alleviate anxiety and enhance mental well-being (Brown & White, 2024). Additionally, a 2024 *Daily Telegraph* article highlights that attending live music events and participating in cultural activities can reduce stress and

improve overall mental health (Harris, 2024). Research by Nguyen and Lee (2021) found that cultural performances provide a therapeutic outlet for individuals, reducing symptoms of social anxiety. Likewise, a study by Wilson (2023) emphasized that preparing for performances fosters self-confidence and resilience among participants, contributing to long-term emotional stability.

Emerging Theme 3: Cultural Awareness and Appreciation

Participation in the festival led to a deeper understanding of cultural values and traditions among participants. This is consistent with efforts to engage younger audiences in cultural events. For example, a 2024 Times article discusses initiatives like Culture Night in Ireland, which aim to attract younger generations to cultural events, thereby enhancing cultural appreciation (Smith & Taylor, 2024).

Furthermore, a 2024 Guardian article underscores the role of arts and cultural engagement in fostering community cohesion and cultural awareness (Brown & White, 2024). Lopez (2020) found that students exposed to cultural festivals develop a stronger sense of identity and belonging. Similarly, Garcia and Thompson (2022) noted that participation in such events increases cross-cultural understanding and appreciation for diversity.

Emerging Theme 4: Challenges and Problem-Solving Skills

Participants encountered challenges such as misplaced items and errors during performances, which necessitated problem-solving and teamwork. While specific studies on this aspect are limited, the collaborative nature of festival preparations likely contributes to enhanced problem-solving abilities.

A 2024 Guardian article notes that engaging in arts and cultural activities can improve cognitive functions, which may aid in addressing challenges during such events (Brown & White, 2024). Research by Patel (2019) supports this claim, stating that teamwork in performance-based activities enhances decision-making skills and adaptability. Additionally, Carter and Evans (2023) found that overcoming logistical difficulties in festivals fosters resilience and leadership among participants.

Conclusion

The following conclusions are based on the synthesized emerging themes and the participants' experiences.

Students' participation in the Talakudong Festival significantly improved their physical endurance, stamina, and overall strength. Through rigorous dance routines under intense conditions, students developed resilience against fatigue, heat exposure, and strenuous physical activities. This endurance training contributed to their ability to perform for extended periods and reinforced their immune system, promoting better physical well-being.

Despite the benefits, students encountered various physical challenges, including exhaustion, body pain, and sleep deprivation. However, their perseverance allowed them to adapt to the festival's demanding conditions gradually. Over time, their bodies adjusted to the strenuous training, reducing discomfort and enhancing their ability to recover from physical hardships. It underscores the role of discipline and determination in overcoming physically demanding activities.

Beyond physical improvements, participation in the Talakudong Festival instilled in students a profound appreciation for their cultural heritage. Engaging in the festival's traditional dance performances helped them understand the significance of the *kudong* and its role in Tacurong's cultural identity. This

experience fostered a strong sense of pride and belonging, reinforcing their commitment to preserving and celebrating their traditions.

The festival's collaborative nature strengthened students' teamwork and discipline. Through synchronized performances, they learned the importance of cooperation, perseverance, and mutual support. The shared experience of rigorous training and performance preparation cultivated strong peer relationships and a collective sense of achievement. Cultural festivities serve as platforms for fostering physical resilience and essential life skills.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **DepEd** may implement structured training programs for student performers, including proper warm-up exercises, hydration protocols, and post-performance recovery strategies to minimize physical strain and enhance endurance.
2. Schools may include lessons on Tacurong's history, the significance of the kudong (hat), and the festival's role in local identity.
3. School Leaders and Teachers may empower student leaders by assigning them responsibilities that require initiative and problem-solving during festival activities. This approach will cultivate leadership skills, quick thinking, and collaborative abilities, enriching students' learning experiences.
4. Student Performers may be encouraged to adopt and maintain self-care routines, including proper stretching, hydration, and sufficient rest. Such practices will enhance stamina, reduce the risk of injuries, and support long-term physical well-being, enabling sustained participation in cultural performances.
5. Future Researchers may conduct longitudinal studies investigating the long-term health effects of festival participation. These studies should aim to identify effective strategies that enhance students' endurance while minimizing physical strain, ultimately optimizing training and recovery methods.

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