



# Nurturing Resilience: The Tapestry of Filipino Values in Communal Strength

**Bistis-Nadala CR<sup>1,2\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Psychoanalysis (Psychoanalyst in Training), Greater Kansas City Psychoanalytic Institute, USA

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychiatry, West Visayas State University, Philippines

**\*Corresponding author:** Christine Rio Bistis-Nadala, Department of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, West Visayas State University, Philippines, Greater Kansas City Psychoanalytic Institute, MO, USA, Tel: +1402-499-0385; Email: drcrjbistisnadala@gmail.com

## Perspective

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## Abstract

This article explores the resilience ingrained in the Filipino community, drawing from the Bahala Na mentality and Bayanihan values. It examines how these cultural elements give rise to a dynamic force within society that goes beyond individual capacities. The narrative centers on a community mental health program in Concepcion, Iloilo, initiated prior to the enactment of the Mental Health Law in the Philippines, tracing its impact over a decade. The article showcases the transformative influence of communal resilience, evident in the increased numbers of patients and the rehabilitation of individuals once considered hopeless. The article artfully weaves together both prose and poetry, capturing the enduring spirit of Concepcion. The conclusion acknowledges the persistent challenges in mental health awareness and suicide prevention. The integrated poetic journey serves to highlight the resilience ingrained in Concepcion, offering a unique perspective in a world often focused on individual achievements. The Filipino experience emerges as a guiding light, exemplifying the profound strength derived from communal bonds in facing life's adversities.

**Keywords:** Mental Health; Bahala Na Mentality; Cultural Elements

## Introduction

In the vibrant tapestry of global cultures, the Philippines stands out as a beacon of resilience, woven intricately with the threads of Bahala Na mentality and Bayanihan values. As we navigate the challenges of the modern world, the Filipino spirit remains an inspiring testament to the power of communal resilience, rooted in the rich cultural values that define the archipelago [1].

### Defining Communal Resilience

Communal resilience is more than a collective ability to bounce back from adversity; it's a dynamic force embedded

in the very fabric of Filipino society. At its core, resilience here is a communal endeavor, where individuals find strength not just within themselves but within the embrace of their communities.

### The Bahala Na Mentality

Bahala Na, often translated as "Come what may" or "Whatever will be, will be," encapsulates the Filipino mindset towards uncertainty. It's not a passive resignation but an active surrender to fate, coupled with an unwavering faith in the collective strength of the community. This mentality is a source of resilience, empowering individuals to face challenges with courage and optimism [2].

**Bayanihan Values:** Bayanihan, a term derived from “bayani” meaning hero, embodies the spirit of communal unity and cooperation. The Bayanihan values emphasize mutual support, shared responsibility, and the understanding that one is not alone in facing life’s struggles. It’s a collective force that turns obstacles into opportunities, fostering resilience at both individual and community levels.

**Cultural Roots of Resilience:** To understand Filipino resilience, one must delve into the cultural roots that nourish it. Family, known as the cornerstone of Filipino society, provides an unyielding support system. The interconnectedness of kinship reinforces a sense of belonging and shared destiny, cultivating resilience in times of adversity.

**Faith and Spirituality:** Another pillar of Filipino resilience is the deeply ingrained faith and spirituality. In the face of challenges, Filipinos often turn to their religious beliefs for solace and guidance. The communal aspect of religious practices and rituals further strengthens the bonds within communities, creating a shared reservoir of resilience.

**Communal Resilience in Times of Calamity:** The true mettle of Filipino communal resilience shines during times of calamity. Natural disasters, unfortunately, are not uncommon in the Philippines, but the response is always marked by Bayanihan values. Communities unite to rebuild, sharing resources, and supporting each other, demonstrating that collective strength is the bedrock of resilience.

**The Modern Challenge: Mental Health:** In the modern era, as mental health takes center stage, the Filipino spirit faces a new frontier. Recognizing the importance of mental well-being, communities are harnessing their inherent resilience to address mental health issues collectively. Initiatives like the mental health program in the Municipality of Concepcion, Iloilo, showcase the transformative power of communal resilience in combating mental health challenges.

**A Personal Experience: Unveiling Resilience in the Face of Mental Health Challenges:** As the narrative of Filipino values unfolds, it becomes crucial to vividly portray these principles in practical scenarios. In my personal experience as a physician in an underprivileged area, a harsh reality emerged – suicide, a widespread threat, emerged as a prominent cause of death in Concepcion, Iloilo. Unfazed by this daunting challenge, we initiated a community mental health program, a clear manifestation of the enduring Bayanihan spirit. It’s worth noting that this endeavor took place before the enactment of the Mental Health Law in the Philippines, which only came into effect in 2018. We pioneered the establishment of the Community Mental Health Program in Western Visayas Philippines as early as 2013.

In the face of resistance and with limited resources, the community rallied together, echoing the Bahala Na mentality that whatever challenges lay ahead would be faced collectively. Armed with a shared determination to heal and fortified by unwavering community support, we began to turn the tide against the silent epidemic of mental health issues.

The story of the program’s evolution unveils the transformative power of communal resilience. From the initial skepticism that shrouded our efforts to the emergence of patient advocacy, each step forward was marked by the collective strength of the community. The narrative encapsulates the essence of bayanihan, emphasizing that resilience is not merely an individual pursuit but a shared commitment to providing a collective foundation for individuals to rise above their challenges.

A decade later, returning to the community unveiled a compelling illustration of communal resilience in action. The enduring impact of the program was palpable, reflected in the significant increase in patient numbers. Those once perceived as hopeless now stood as functional citizens, their narratives echoing the triumphant spirit of bayanihan values prevailing over adversity.

Despite my physical absence in the area, having transitioned into a psychiatrist and presently a psychoanalyst in training in the United States of America, I, the program’s initiator and constant consultant, revisited the islands in 2023. During this visit, I provided retraining and crafted the first psychodynamically informed training manual for community mental health in the locality. This initiative marked a continued commitment to fostering mental health resilience rooted in the rich tapestry of Filipino values.

However, despite the success achieved, the road ahead in the realm of mental health awareness and suicide prevention remains challenging. While the program has made significant strides, a pressing need persists for broader education about mental health. The battle against increasing suicide rates necessitates a united front, echoing the collective spirit of Bahala Na, where communities actively engage in crisis intervention and mental health advocacy.

In the dynamic dance of Bahala Na and Bayanihan values [3], the journey unfolds. It is a testament to the collective strength that transforms adversity into opportunity, despair into hope. The Filipino experience in Concepcion [4], Iloilo, stands as a beacon, illustrating that in the face of mental health challenges, communal resilience is not just a concept but a tangible force that shapes the trajectory of lives and communities.

### Harmonizing Strengths in Verses: The Communal Resilience of Concepcion, Iloilo

In the heart of Concepcion, Iloilo, where the islands gracefully meet the sea, the narrative of communal resilience takes on a poetic hue. As we seamlessly integrate the verses that follow, the beauty of these islands intertwines with the resilience of its people. The following poem encapsulates the essence of the journey we've explored, inviting you to feel the rhythm of resilience that beats in the heart of Concepcion.

#### Resilient Rhapsody: A Communal Ode to Concepcion, Iloilo's Mental Health Journey:

In Concepcion, Iloilo, Philippines, where islands grace the sea,  
Resilience blooms, a tale of community decree.  
Far-flung and isolated, a geographical divide,  
Yet, in the heart of struggle, determination thrives.

Seventeen islands, a patchwork of beauty,  
Beaches whisper secrets, soil promises fertility.  
A far-off haven, disadvantaged, yet strong,  
Concepcion's spirit, an empowering song.

Ten years ago, a vision took flight,  
A community mental health program, a beacon in the night.  
Initiated by one, proud and true,  
In the hands of many, the flame only grew.

Rural health physicians, with hearts so bold,  
Staff in the front lines, stories to unfold.  
Together they stand, against stigma's tide,  
Sustaining the program, a collective stride.

From 78 patients, a decade past,  
To 220 now, a number vast.  
Home visits weave through the island air,  
Care reaching hearts, showing them someone's there.

In the absence of the initiator's physical grace,  
The community stands, empowered, a resilient embrace.  
Old patients turned advocates, voices strong,  
Seeking help themselves, showing where they belong.

Now, in Concepcion, Iloilo, a fresh chapter begins,  
Psychoanalyst in training and psychiatrist, guiding lights within.  
Back to the origins, where the journey did commence,  
Adjusting the approach, where enlightenment first gained eminence.

Educated the entire team, leading the course,  
Psychoanalytic principles, illuminated by daylight's force.

Unconscious containment, a theme vivid and clear,  
Upholding mental well-being, around the clock, year after year.

Amidst the island echoes, the program's melody resounds,  
Both longstanding and recent patients, a resilient community surround.

In the symphony of advancement, embraced by rural grace,  
Concepcion stands proudly, a space of empowerment and embrace.

As we transition back to our discussion, let the verses linger in your mind, underscoring the beauty of resilience in both prose and poetry. The poetic odyssey seamlessly weaves into the narrative, vividly illustrating the fortitude and resolve of the Concepcion community. This enduring spirit resonates not only in the words expressed but also in the very pulse of Concepcion, Iloilo, as it sustains the community mental health program throughout the years [5].

### Conclusion

In a world that often celebrates individual achievements, the Filipino experience reminds us of the profound strength found in communal bonds. Bahala Na and Bayanihan values form the backbone of a resilience that not only withstands adversity but thrives amidst it. As we navigate an increasingly interconnected world, embracing and preserving these values becomes a universal call to fortify our collective spirit and face the future with unwavering strength. The Filipino journey is an inspiring testament to the enduring power of communal resilience, a beacon guiding us through the storms of life.

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