

Ginhawa Sa Tawanan?: Filipino Humor in Flood-Prone Area

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ABSTRACT

Since the Philippines has experienced the strongest typhoons, residents in flood-prone areas continue to experience distress related to flooding. Despite this, Filipinos are known to smile through everything. The study explored how Filipino humor is utilized to promote *ginhawa* among residents amid flooding. The study involved fifteen (15) participants living in the frequently flooded barangay of Frances, Calumpit, Bulacan, through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach and semi-structured interviews, the research explored their attitudes toward Filipino humor during flooding, their utilization of Filipino humor, their psycho-emotional experiences, and how it contributes to *ginhawa*. Ethical standards, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly upheld throughout the study. The thematic analyses revealed that residents generally have a positive attitude towards Filipino humor, viewing it as socially acceptable in stressful circumstances. Despite this acceptance, it was noted that Filipino humor must be used with caution depending on the person, context, and relationship. Moreover, the study indicated that while Filipino humor alleviates burdens, it does not eliminate the realities caused by flooding's impacts but rather serves as a means of temporary emotional relief. Given these findings, the study suggests exploring other community strategies for enhancing *ginhawa* amid flooding. The study also emphasizes the need for policymakers to offer concrete institutional support for residents of flood-prone areas to achieve long-term *ginhawa*.

Keywords: Filipino Humor, Flooding, Flood-Prone Area, Ginhawa

INTRODUCTION

Flooding is one of the most common natural disasters in the Philippines (Rivera & Dela Vega, 2025). The situation of flooding poses not only physical and economic hazards, but also emotional and psychological burdens (Heanoy & Brown, 2024). Such disasters often challenge Filipino's *ginhawa*—an indigenized concept of well-being (Bautista, 2024; Rungduin et al., 2025). With every typhoon that hits the country, photos where Filipinos still manage to smile and laugh in the midst of flooding continue to circulate online (Bollozos, 2025; Patag, 2018; Robillos, 2017). Smiling and laughing are forms of humor that arise in the midst of disaster (Martin & Ford, 2018). Given these realities, it would be noteworthy to verify if the positive outlook of Filipinos manifested in humor would also serve as a weapon to alleviate the burdens of flooding, at least in a short period of time.

The Problem and Its Background

Over the past years, the Philippines has experienced some of the strongest typhoons in its history, such as Ondoy in 2009, Yolanda in 2013, Rolly in 2020, Odette in 2021, and Enteng in 2024 (Clarete et al., 2017; Rivera & Dela Vega, 2025; Santos, 2021). These natural disasters have left widespread devastation in the lives of Filipinos, and one of their most destructive effects is flooding (Kurata et al., 2023). Among the first to be affected are locations situated in flood-prone areas, where overflowing water quickly submerges homes and surrounding areas (Ologunorisa, 2022; Yin, 2019; Zelenáková et al., 2020). Hence, the risk does not stop with

flooding but poses more serious hazards to safety, health, economy, and the overall well-being of the people (Paterson et al., 2018).

The trends of different adversities are not new to Filipinos, especially flooding. Its aftermath goes beyond damage to infrastructure (Rivera & Dela Vega, 2025), as studies have also explored its significant psychological effects. Although flooding is common to Filipinos, it remains a persistent issue that has been found to cause emotional distress (Asim et al., 2022; Escobar-Carias et al., 2022). Existing studies suggest that responses to flooding vary depending on the severity of the disaster, prior distressing experiences, and cultural factors, with intense stressors often producing stronger reactions (Lewis et al., 2011, as cited in Lechowska, 2018). Furthermore, individuals' experiences with past distressing events may influence their present reactions to similar situations, while their cultural background may shape how they express and manage these emotions. For instance, some Filipinos respond to flooding with intense fear and feelings of being overwhelmed, especially when the situation is life-threatening, while others show only mild reactions as they are already used to such situations (Abad et al., 2020; Alibudbud, 2023; Onsay et al., 2025; Songcayaon et al., 2020). Thus, these observations emphasize that flooding triggers both emotional and physical distress through how people handle and react to it, affecting Filipinos' well-being.

Despite the circumstances Filipinos faced during flooding, it was known how they smiled through everything, good or bad. For instance, various pictures of Filipinos smiling while either submerged in floodwaters or in the midst of the storm's onslaught continuously circulated online, showing that their smiles seemed connected to positivity and resilience, as they still choose to smile and continue living their lives despite the flood surrounding their community (Bollozos, 2025; Patag, 2018; Robillos, 2017). In fact, the Philippines scored high in national reports on happiness and optimism (Casucian, 2025; Helliwell et al., 2025). This supports the notion that Filipinos' resilience, optimism, and strong social support make them one of the happiest people in the world.

This perceived positive attitude among Filipinos has attracted both scholarly and public attention. Recent studies have described Filipino resilience during natural disasters as a form of toxic positivity, suggesting that excessive optimism may prevent individuals from fully addressing the issues these disasters bring (Mendoza, 2024; Pangngay, 2026). In contrast, other studies view positivity and resilience as beneficial, particularly when individuals receive support from their families (Hechanova et al., 2015). Furthermore, the findings of Aterrado et al. (2022) indicate that resilience during disasters is largely influenced by the positive emotions experienced within the community. Thus, these perspectives suggest that while Filipino resilience may be interpreted differently, positive emotional support within families and communities continues to play an important role in strengthening individuals' capacity to cope with disasters.

Filipinos, who are often regarded as among the happiest people in the world, may tend to use humor in various situations. This is supported by the findings of Ford et al. (2016), stating that individuals who are generally happy tend to use humor more positively in their daily lives. In psychology, humor is conceptualized as a multidimensional form of social interaction in which a humorous stimulus is interpreted through an individual's perception. It involves emotional reactions such as relief or happiness, observable behaviors such as laughter, and cognitive processes (Martin & Ford, 2018). In the Philippine context, Filipino humor emerges in ways that are commonly reflected in Filipinos' daily lives, eliciting laughter. This behavioral response is suggested as a way for Filipinos to manage life challenges (Ancheta, 2021). Moreover, Nicomedes et al. (2020) emphasized that humor serves as a protective factor in navigating stress and challenges. This justifies Filipino humor not merely as a source of entertainment but as a cultural and functional tool that enables them to handle difficulties in life (Ancheta, 2021). Thus, in this study, Filipino humor is operationally defined as a culturally grounded form of humor expressed in the Philippine context, as reflected in the lives of Filipinos.

Despite these perceptions of humor, challenges still remain. Although Filipino humor is commonly used in everyday conversations, it is often only studied in general contexts, which limits understanding of its deeper meanings. Additionally, various studies continue to have conflicting views on humor. Some see it as a positive coping strategy that helps individuals deal with stress and adversity, while others view it negatively, arguing that it can decrease the seriousness of difficult situations and discourage rational thinking about

existing problems. Therefore, there is a need to explore further how Filipino humor might enhance individual well-being, especially in flood-prone area.

It is deemed noteworthy to explore how Filipino humor is utilized and perceived by people living in flood-prone area and how it contributes to their well-being amid recurring flooding. Moreover, it aims to determine the perceived psycho-emotional experiences of residents who use Filipino humor. This highlights the need to address the limited research on Filipino humor in an area frequently affected by floods.

In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), this study aims to contribute to SDG No. 3: Good Health and Well-being (United Nations, 2015). By exploring the narratives of Filipinos in a flood-prone area, it seeks to highlight the role of humor in promoting well-being. Hence, it aims to support psychological wellness and strengthen the community in times of crisis.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of related literature examines *ginhawa*, humor, and the psychosocial aftermath of flooding in flood-prone areas, identifying research gaps that highlight the relevance of the present study.

The Indigenized Concept of Well-Being

Well-being is said to be linked with happiness, positive feelings, overall health, and life satisfaction of an individual (Deci & Ryan, 2008, as cited in Rungduin et al., 2025; Tov, 2018). However, well-being may be subjective and can vary across cultures. Lazo (2021) and Rungduin et al. (2025) suggest that the study of well-being should be culturally relevant, appropriate, and meaningful to the lives of the people, as culture provides a deeper understanding of the factors that influence an individual's well-being.

The concept of well-being has been indigenized in the Philippines as *ginhawa*. According to Paz (2008 as cited in Rungduin et al., 2025), *ginhawa* is the idea of breath (*hininga*), specifically ease in breathing (*gaan ng hininga*) and breathing freely (*paghinga nang maluwang*). Furthermore, breathing symbolizes a deeper meaning as it freely signifies a positive life, while heavy breathing suggests life's difficulties. That is why *ginhawa* is the result of healthy relationships and experiences within the community.

Various researchers have studied *ginhawa* — the overall feeling of ease, life satisfaction, and personal harmony (Bautista, 2024). Additionally, four manifestations of *ginhawa* were identified: *sigla* (vitality), *gana* (drive), *gaan* (lightness), and *ligaya* (joy), with joy resulting from the first three (Bautista, 2024). Recently, *ginhawa* is described as a continuous life experience with two dimensions: *ginhawang panloob* (internality), the internal state of the self, manifesting affect, behavior, and cognition, and *ginhawang panlabas* (externality), the material possessions and the quality of one's relationships with others (Rungduin et al., 2025). Attaining either of these two dimensions leads to *ginhawa* that contributes to a good life. Yet, even though challenges are inevitable, it is still possible to experience *ginhawa* even amid difficulties when the hope of its return sustains or gives hope to those who are suffering (Bautista, 2024).

Ginhawa may be manifested in various contexts. In religion, devotees of the Black Nazarene believe that *ginhawa* is the reward for all the difficulties they experience, the forgiveness of their sins, and healing from illnesses, as a result of their sacrifices and devotion (Calano, 2018). Regarding *ginhawa* during natural disasters, only one study has been conducted by Ladrigo-Ignacio (2011, as cited in Rungduin et al. 2025), which highlighted the significance of achieving *ginhawa* by overcoming the negative effects of that particular calamity.

Individually, *ginhawa* may also be manifested through emotions—being happy (*pagiging masaya*), and joy (*ligaya*) (Rungduin et al., 2025). These emotional states reflect an inner sense of lightness that arises when one experiences harmony within oneself and with others (Bautista, 2024). Hence, such joy is often expressed through smiling or laughing and is frequently associated with humor (Martin & Ford, 2018).

The Concept of Humor

Humor is known as a universal human experience. It is a perception of something as entertaining or funny, accompanied by amusement and often followed by laughter (Warren et al., 2020). This definition emphasizes that humor is not simply about comedy and jokes but also about how individuals evaluate and perceive a particular situation. Moreover, the concept of humor is multifaceted and varies according to context. Martin and Ford (2018) stated that humor differs widely across cultures and social groups because it is shaped by norms, values, and expectations. This implies that what may be funny in one setting can be misunderstood or offensive in another, highlighting the importance of the social and situational context of humor.

From a psychological perspective, Martin and Ford (2018) described humor as a form of social play, emphasizing its interactive nature. People are most likely to experience humor when they are with others (Bryant et al., 2016). Moreover, humor can also be understood through three psychological components: cognition, affect, and behavior. First, humor requires a stimulus that establishes a social or playful context, whether through verbal or nonverbal cues. Second, it involves a cognitive process in which individuals recognize irony or playfulness in a situation. This triggers an emotional or affective response, often in the form of amusement or mirth. Finally, humor produces a behavioral expression through laughter or smiling, signaling that the stimulus was perceived as funny. This framework helps address questions about the universality of humor and provides insight into how humor functions.

Humor also comes in many forms. Martin and Ford (2018) listed four different types of humor, namely performance humor, which refers to a humor that is part of a staged performance; jokes, brief yet humorous stories that end with a punch line; spontaneous conversational humor, which occurs spontaneously during social interactions either verbally or nonverbally; and unintentional humor that occurs accidentally. These types of humor arose from everyday social interactions and ordinary conversations among individuals.

In the Philippines, humor is shaped by how individuals perceive what is humorous, the emotions it creates, and the reactions it elicits, which later led to the term "Filipino humor." Balmores-Paulino (2018) describes Filipino humor as an expression of wit, spontaneity, and resilience, with these traits reflecting how Filipino humor functions as a way to manage life challenges. Lara et al. (2025) noted that it is also grounded in unique Filipino values, such as *pakikibagay* (adaptability) and *katatagan* (resiliency). These values reinforce collective spirit and social bonds, making humor integral to Filipino life.

In recent times, Filipino humor has gone beyond laughter, serving as a cultural tool to cope with life challenges, strengthen a sense of belonging, and reflect on social conditions (Ancheta, 2021). In line with this, Watanabe (2025) wrote that puns, satire, and irony were the most prominent types of Filipino humor that are used daily and in engaging with societal issues. Stand-up comedy is also a common form of Filipino humor, in which comedians incorporate personal experiences to create relatable moments (Joser et al., 2023). Given the current influence of the internet, people convey their humor more creatively through memes to call out government inadequacy and social inequalities, and as a coping mechanism for the stress and anxiety brought on by crises like the COVID-19 pandemic (Frigillano, 2023; Kablingue et al., 2023). This implies that Filipino humor encourages individuals to engage with social issues and express their grievances in humorous ways.

Theories on Humor

Several theories have been developed to describe and explain humor, including classical theories that explain why people find certain situations humorous and how humor functions in human behavior. One of the earliest theories about humor is the Relief Theory (hereinafter RT), which states that humor is the release of psychological tension or pent-up energy (Spencer, 1860, as cited in Martin & Ford, 2018). This theory suggests that when emotions build up nervous energy or tension, the body must release it through habitual behaviors such as speaking or smiling. However, if these actions are not enough, the person then responds with laughter to relieve the body's excess tension. In short, laughter or humor provides emotional relief. This theory serves as the foundation for understanding how humor relates to coping and stress management.

The classical theories of humor laid the foundation for modern perspectives, such as the well-known Benign Violation Theory (hereinafter BVT) by McGraw and Warren (2010), which explains that humor occurs when a social norm is violated, yet the violation is perceived as benign or harmless. BVT explains that for something to be considered humorous, three factors should be present. First, the situation is a violation, which means it violates norms. Second, the situation is seen as benign, meaning it is appropriate, harmless, and safe. Lastly, both of the above-mentioned criteria must occur simultaneously. However, if individuals see only the violation, they might feel offended, and if they see it only as benign, the situation will not be humorous. The BVT shows how humor involves the mental process of interpreting a situation, while context, such as psychological distance, cultural norms, tone, and social interactions, plays a key role in whether a violation is seen as harmless and in the perception of humor.

Both classical and modern theories help in understanding how humor works, highlighting its cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. Humor not only helps individuals cope but also promotes community resilience in times of crisis and becomes a universal language of endurance and connection.

Cultural Perspectives on Humor

Humor is a universally shared and expressed phenomenon that facilitates good communication and smooth interactions (Cao et al., 2023). However, people's way of expressing humor may vary across cultures (Jiang et al., 2019). Culture is defined as the shared values, behaviors, or beliefs of a group of people in a certain area, shaped through communication and shared experiences (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023). For example, it is evident how Westerners, such as those in North America, have an individualistic culture. Meanwhile, Easterners, such as those in Asian countries, emphasize collectivism and harmony (Maheshkar & Sonwalkar, 2023). These differences suggest that culture shapes how social distance influences humor.

Historically, Said (1979, as cited in Al-fahad, 2023), noted that the assumption that Asians are generally serious came from a cultural misunderstanding during the colonial period. Colonized people perceived the colonizer's rigidity and seriousness as formal and civilized, and adopted these traits. Due to these Western interpretations, the expression of comedy and satire by Asians was often not recognized as humor because it did not conform to dominant Western norms of humor.

Cultural variations in humor were evident between the Chinese and Western participants. In a study by Jiang et al. (2019), Chinese and Canadian students were compared to examine differences in terms of their perceptions, usage, and social implications. The study found that Chinese participants were more likely to share and appreciate humor with distant others, viewing it more cautiously and seriously because they believe it could threaten their social status. Similarly, Lu (2023) and Yue et al. (2016) noted that Chinese participants perceived Canadian students as more humorous. However, Lu (2023) emphasized that these findings do not necessarily mean that Westerners are inherently funnier than the Chinese; rather, humor varies widely across cultures, contexts, and audiences.

Variations in humor expression across cultures were also seen between the Chinese and the Filipinos, challenging the notion that Asians are overly serious (Davis 2022; Lu 2023). For instance, the cheerful disposition and highly communal roots of Filipinos contribute to their tendency to use humor. (Ancheta, 2021; Licuanan, 1994, as cited in Benitez, 2022). To support this, studies show that Filipino learners prefer instructional humor to serious classroom discussion because it enhances their performance, and that teachers' humor styles positively influence academic outcomes (Camayang et al., 2021; Bautista, 2022). Balmores-Paulino (2018) also noted that humor is rooted in language, highlighting the importance of understanding the different local contextualizations of humor across regions in the Philippines. Hence, these findings contradict the notion that Asians always prefer seriousness over humor and highlight the varied use of humor in individuals' daily lives.

Humor Utilization

Humor can be used in various ways and contexts. Martin et al. (2003, as cited in Sharma et al., 2023) classified the utilization of humor into two styles, namely adaptive (affiliative and self-enhancing) and

maladaptive (aggressive and self-defeating). Adaptive humor styles are known to positively contribute to an individual's psychological well-being and self-esteem (Stieger et al., 2011, as cited in Sharma et al., 2023). This was supported by several studies, including Wang et al. (2022), which suggest that adaptive humor positively influences professional fulfillment and reduces burnout. Similarly, Sukor et al. (2025) note that adaptive humor also alleviates stress and enhances well-being, possibly because humor enables positive responses to threatening situations (Kuiper, 1993, as cited in Sukor et al., 2025). Humor is also used as a defense mechanism, particularly in stressful or unpleasant circumstances (Antonovici, 2015; Kyomugisha, 2025), allowing individuals to approach life with a light-hearted manner and fostering psychological resilience (Schneider et al., 2018).

Although humor can have positive effects, it can also have negative ones, leading to maladaptive humor styles that distract individuals from addressing their true emotions and the current problem (Menéndez-Aller et al., 2019). People tend to overlook the ability of humor to mock and humiliate other people, and even themselves (deCruz-Dixon, 2023). Humor can mask harsh criticism, mockery, and contempt, which may be mean or damaging when used improperly (Ibrahim, 2022). For instance, making fun of people suffering in sensitive situations—such as the loss of a loved one, being fired, epidemics, or natural disasters—is generally inappropriate (Kaya & Yağan, 2022). That is why it is important to consider its style, context, and target audience. Thus, all points to the fact that improper use of humor is connected to psychological distress, including depression, which negatively affects well-being (deCruz-Dixon, 2023; Sharma et al., 2023).

In terms of social interaction, humor through shared laughter promotes social connectedness among individuals (Lara et al., 2025). Maiolino and Kuiper (2016) stated that humor can serve as a collective resource, strengthening social bonds and providing relief during difficulties. Even when faced with adversity, the ability to find humor in the situation can provide a sense of relief, helping an individual to maintain a positive outlook (Sharma et al., 2023). It may also be used by individuals to be perceived as someone capable of dealing with stressful situations, even though they are in the middle of experiencing a high level of anxiety and distress (Davey, 1993, as cited in Dionigi et al., 2023)

In Filipino culture, humor has been noted as a coping strategy during difficult times and adversities (Hechanova, 2015, as cited in Rigor & Alianan, 2025). Filipinos are known for their resilience and optimism, and through humor, they have eased the burden of crises such as natural disasters (Lara et al., 2025). Moreover, Balmores-Paulino (2021) stated that individuals cope in their own ways despite facing similar challenges, often finding comfort through laughter, as Martin and Ford (2018) noted that humor can contribute to an individual's well-being by prompting a laugh or smile.

Natural Disasters and its Psychosocial Aftermaths

The Philippines is highly prone to various natural disasters, particularly typhoons, due to its location along the Pacific Ring of Fire and the Pacific Typhoon Belt (The ASEAN Magazine, 2023; Clarete et al., 2017; Rivera & Dela Vega, 2025; Santos, 2021). In 2024, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) named Bulacan as one of the most flood-prone areas in the Philippines due to the surrounding bodies of water, along with their topography, land subsidence, and limited drainage systems. Flores (2025) reported that this aforementioned area often experiences severe flooding and was placed under a state of calamity last July 2025.

Living in a flood-prone area is said to be more stressful. The common experiences of people living in these places include floodwater reaching their knees or hips. In some cases, floodwater entered their houses, and some woke up in the middle of the night because their houses were already submerged, causing damage to their properties (Lagos et al., 2023). In Bulacan, areas such as Calumpit suffered severe flood damage due to their proximity to several rivers, including Pampanga, Angat, and Labangan (Ohara et al., 2018). Thus, victims reported experiencing disturbances to mobility and property caused by floodwater (Lagos et al., 2023).

Typhoons disrupt education and livelihoods due to the use of classrooms as temporary evacuation centers, damaged learning materials, and increased stress (Cadag et al., 2017). Heavy rains and flooding also hinder the transportation and agricultural activities of the country's farmers and fishermen. In fact, Serioño et al.

(2020) reported that crop losses during Typhoon Yolanda caused small-scale coconut farmers in Leyte to lose years of income. If this continues, they might go without any income for the day—or even for an entire month—putting their family at risk of hunger (Serd, 2024).

Flooding also affects individuals' mental health and well-being. Survivors of disasters have also experienced limited access to resources and poor housing conditions, which affected their capacity to cope effectively (Escobar-Carias et al., 2022). According to Beckers et al. (2023), fear is a natural response to threat, and was evident among flood-affected individuals as children experienced fear, anxiety, and physical distress from contaminated water (Songcayaon et al., 2020). In addition, victims also experienced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbances, with PTSD being among the most common diagnoses after exposure (Heanoy & Brown, 2024; Crandon et al., 2022; Akram & Mushtaq, 2024). These aforementioned challenges faced by Filipinos are dreadful and hard to cope with, especially for the people in flood-prone communities.

Although it is challenging, Filipinos approach these challenges in different ways. Aguas (2016) noted that *pakikipagkapwa*—the appreciation and consideration of one another—also plays a role in coping. This shows how individuals support others through their hardships and stand by them, revealing profound care and empathy, further demonstrating care and consideration for the person. Consequently, *pakikipagkapwa* shows deep acceptance and considers an individual an extension of themselves rather than a stranger, further proving that Filipinos have a high regard for interpersonal relationships and shared connections. (Enriquez, 1997, as cited in Canete & del Castillo, 2022).

The Research Gap

Existing studies have widely used humor across various contexts, and several studies have highlighted its general effects in different circumstances. Balmores-Paulino (2018) emphasized that humor is deeply rooted in language, implying that Filipino humor manifests across different regional contexts in the Philippines. On the other hand, the findings of Lara et al. (2025) suggest that humor can help individuals relieve stress, foster resilience, and cope with life's challenges. Despite these perspectives, the concept of Filipino humor remains underexplored, particularly in relation to current issues such as recurring flooding in the Philippines. Exploring Filipino humor in this context may offer insights into how residents cope with recurring flooding and how these experiences contribute to their sense of *ginhawa*. Through this inquiry, the study also seeks to deepen the understanding of Filipino humor and further support the claim that humor functions not only as entertainment but also as a cultural tool for navigating life's difficulties (Ancheta, 2021).

Despite these findings, there remains a knowledge gap regarding how Filipino humor contributes to *ginhawa*, specifically in a flood-prone area. Existing research explored humor generally, or in clinical, social, and political settings, but there is still limited knowledge about how people repeatedly affected by floods use humor to adapt and maintain their *ginhawa*. In line with the recommendation of Balmores-Paulino (2018), expanding studies in specific local communities can help uncover the culturally grounded expressions of Filipino humor. In addition, the perspectives of residents in a flood-prone area in Bulacan remain underexplored, as previous studies have focused on other areas of the Philippines, such as Batangas (Lara et al., 2025), thereby indicating a population gap.

The Current Study

This study explores how residents in a flood-prone area experience, express, and utilize Filipino humor in the face of flooding-related challenges. Employing a phenomenological approach, it examines how Filipino humor is expressed through jokes and laughter and how it may contribute to residents' *ginhawa*. It also explores how Filipino humor is used in a flood-prone area and whether its functions adaptively or maladaptively in contributing to *ginhawa*. Participants are residents of Barangay Frances, Calumpit, Bulacan, a frequently flooded area, who shared their common experiences, insights, and personal stories about how Filipino humor is utilized during flooding.

The study is limited to Calumpit, Bulacan, an area considered flood-prone by the Provincial Disaster Risk and Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO, Bulacan, n.d.), and includes only residents who participate voluntarily. It does not attempt to generalize its findings to all Filipinos, as it focuses only on a specific area. Furthermore, the study does not explore the direct effects of flooding but rather how people use humor with such experiences. It is also limited to humor as a means of contributing to well-being, excluding other factors that could influence it, such as socioeconomic status, individual differences, and stress levels. Thus, these limitations highlight the research's objective of determining how Filipino humor contributes to individuals' well-being.

Research Objectives

This study examines how Filipino humor is utilized as a tool to promote *ginhawa* in a flood-prone area. Hence, this study aims to address the following objectives:

1. To describe the attitude of residents in flood-prone area toward Filipino humor during flooding.
2. To assess how Filipino humor is being utilized in a flood-prone area.
3. To explore the perceived psycho-emotional experiences among residents in flood-prone area.
4. To determine how Filipino humor contributes to Filipinos' *ginhawa*.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Filipinos being regarded as humorous and resilient, they are often affected by flooding. Meanwhile, little is known about how Filipino humor contributes to Filipinos' *ginhawa* in a flood-prone area. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the attitude of residents in flood-prone area towards Filipino humor during flooding?
2. How is Filipino humor being utilized in a flood-prone area?
3. What are the psycho-emotional experiences among residents in a flood-prone area?
4. How does Filipino humor contribute to Filipinos' *ginhawa*?

METHODS

This section outlines the research design, the sampling method for selecting participants, the discussion guide, the procedures, the data analysis techniques employed to interpret the findings, and the ethical considerations that guide the study.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design rooted in the constructivist paradigm. Qualitative study offers a unique lens in exploring the subjective experiences of individuals, as it provides an in-depth understanding of a complex social phenomenon (Lim, 2024). Under qualitative studies, phenomenological research allows researchers to describe and gain a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, shaped by their lived experiences, on a complex phenomenon (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). This research design aligns with the constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of individuals' subjective interpretations of the multiple realities around them, and their interpretations of assigned meanings can be revealed through dialogues or interviews (Ugwu et al., 2021). Thus, this research design helped the researchers to understand how Filipino humor contributes to the *ginhawa* of residents in a flood-prone area.

Participants

This study implemented non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, to select participants who could provide significant insights into how humor fosters a sense of *ginhawa* in a flood-prone area. According to Sarfo et al. (2021), phenomenological studies typically include 5 to 25 participants. In line with this, a total of 15 participants participated in the study, which falls within the suggested range. This allowed the researchers to gather deeper insights and experiences while remaining feasible for an in-depth

analysis. The participants were residents of Barangay Frances in Calumpit, Bulacan, a community classified as a high-risk flood-prone area due to its location along the Pampanga and Angat Rivers (Tolentino et al., 2022).

The participants met all the inclusion criteria for this study. The participants ranged from 21 to 63 years old, most of them were female, and represented all *puroks* from the barangay to ensure that the narratives of the residents are equally captured and represented. Most of the participants have lived in the area since birth, so they have personally experienced the effects of flooding. To ensure that the participants were suitable for the study, a screening tool was utilized to identify individuals who naturally use humor and can represent the population of humorous residents in the area. These criteria ensured that participants had the perspective and experience necessary to explain how humor helps them to have a sense of relief and well-being in challenging situations. Hence, purposive sampling enabled the selection of individuals whose experiences were directly relevant to the research focus, ensuring that the data accurately represented participants' experiences.

Instruments

To effectively gather participants' experiences with utilizing Filipino humor during times of flooding, the researchers utilized a discussion guide to facilitate the focus group discussion (hereinafter FGD). Specifically, this guide served as the manual for conducting the FGD. It includes various questions designed to build rapport, focusing on the participants and their experiences with flooding. The discussion then shifted to their use of Filipino humor and concluded with questions about the participants' well-being. The questions were guided by the research objectives. Also, it was written in a semi-structured format, which allowed participants to express themselves freely and enabled the researchers to ask follow-up or probing questions. Hence, the discussion guide was utilized only to facilitate the discussion once it had been validated by a professional.

To ensure that the participants truly represent the target population, which comprises individuals who naturally use humor in everyday life, the researchers utilized the Richmond Humor Assessment Instrument (hereinafter RHA), developed by Virginia Richmond in 2001. RHA is a self-report measure that assesses an individual's use of humor in daily communication. It consists of 16 questions about the use of humor, answered on a five-point Likert scale. The reported Cronbach's alpha reliability for this instrument was .95, indicating high reliability. In terms of scoring, scores of 60 and above indicated high humor usage, scores of 30 and below indicated low humor usage, and scores between 31 and 60 indicated a moderate degree of humor usage (Wrench & Richmond, 2004).

Procedures

The researchers developed a discussion guide to gather data through FGD. These questions underwent validation with the assistance of a professional to ensure their validity. After validation, the researchers conducted a pilot test with one resident of Barangay Frances, Calumpit, Bulacan, who met the inclusion criteria, to ensure the effectiveness and flow of the discussion guide. During the pilot testing proper, the researchers first discussed the information sheet and the informed consent form (hereinafter ICF) and the purpose of the study with the participant. Then the participant voluntarily signed the ICF and completed the RHA, a screening tool that assesses their use of humor. After ensuring the participant met the desired score of 31 or higher, the researchers proceeded with the FGD, during which they asked the questions outlined in the validated discussion guide. After the interview, a debriefing session was held, and the participant was given a token of appreciation for participating in the pilot testing. After collecting the data, it was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, during which themes were produced.

For the FGD proper, the researchers coordinated with the barangay council of Frances in Calumpit, Bulacan, to identify potential participants from different *puroks* within the same flood-prone neighborhood who met the specified inclusion criteria, ensuring that the area was well represented. After identifying the potential participants, they were screened using the RHA. Only those with scores of 31 and above were eligible to participate in the FGD. These eligible participants were then included in the study. Before the FGD proper, the researchers read and explained the ICF to each participant, including measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. In discussing the ICF, the researchers explained the study's purpose and

objectives, enabling participants to clearly understand the study's scope and significance. Moreover, participants were given the option to withdraw at any time, as their participation was completely voluntary. During the FGD, the participants expressed excitement about participating in the group discussion. They actively answered all the questions and shared their experiences about living in a flood-prone area and utilizing humor. In line with this, the participants were able to throw jokes and banter at each other, which came naturally throughout the whole conversation with the group. This made the discussion feel lighter and smooth-flowing. After conducting the FGD, the researchers held a debriefing session to ensure the participants' well-being. Then, each participant received a token from the researchers. Finally, the collected data were transcribed and analyzed.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the FDG in this study were analyzed using Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). As the study explored the subjective experiences of individuals in a flood-prone area through Filipino humor, utilizing thematic analysis is the most appropriate approach for interpreting and understanding themes and patterns.

To ensure that the data is properly interpreted, the researchers followed the six phases of Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) which are (1) familiarization with data, which includes actively engaging with the materials and noting crucial patterns and insights; (2) generating initial codes, which includes comprehensively working through the data to identify meaningful coding; (3) searching for themes, where codes were now being grouped into broader themes to organize their relatedness to the research questions; (4) reviewing themes, where themes were now reviewed to ensure accurate representation and coherence; (5) defining and naming themes, where refining of themes take place in order to highlight clarity; and (6) writing the report, which includes presenting the findings in a coherent and detailed manner — finally interpreting the the data meaningfully.

Prior to the interview proper, the researchers conducted a pilot test to initially oversee the flow and effectiveness of the interview session and the questions. The data collected from the interview were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. Since the study aims to explore the subjective experiences of individuals in a flood-prone area through Filipino humor, thematic analysis is the most appropriate approach for interpreting and understanding themes and patterns.

The researchers initially conducted a pilot study to assess the possible flow before the proper FGD. The pilot study helped them identify decision points to refine and improve the data collection and thematic analysis processes. These include familiarity with the FGD flow, improving and editing redundant questions, rechecking the material's clarity, and assessing the questions' effectiveness in addressing the research problem. These processes helped the researchers further assess and revise items that needed rewording and clarification, ensuring they were appropriate for use. Furthermore, the FGD duration was monitored to account for participant fatigue. Participant engagement was another critical factor, as well as how the facilitator executed the flow. These processes collectively guided the researchers in the crucial adjustments needed to strengthen the final implementation of the FGD.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers followed the Code of Ethics for Philippine Psychologists and Psychometricians, which was implemented in 2022 by the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP). They ensured that the ethical standards outlined in the code of ethics were observed, as well as those under RA 10173—the Data Privacy Act of 2012—under which participants' rights and information are legally protected. Additionally, the ICF was administered during pilot testing and prior to the FGD to confirm that participation was voluntary. The researchers also made certain that participants would not experience any harm.

The ICF included: (1) the right to decline, participate, or withdraw at any point; (2) reassurance and confidentiality that the data collected would be used exclusively for research and academic purposes, and will be inaccessible after the study concludes; (3) their right to benefit from potential future contributions of this

study; and (4) their incentives and benefits for participating. When participants chose to end their involvement, the researchers respected and acknowledged their decision. Lastly, a debriefing was conducted after the session.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the present study, which assess the collective experiences of residents in a flood-prone area (hereinafter FPA) and how these contribute to their *ginhawa* (well-being). Specifically, the research explores the following key concerns: (1) *the attitudes of residents in FPA toward Filipino humor during flooding*, (2) *the utilization of Filipino humor in FPA*, (3) *the perceived psycho-emotional experiences among residents in FPA*, and (4) *the contribution of Filipino humor to Filipinos' ginhawa*.

The data were gathered through focus group discussions (hereinafter FGD) with residents in FPA. The data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), to contribute to the development of novel concepts about Filipino humor for future research and for possible interventions in natural disasters, specifically in flooding. Below are the emerging themes that address the objectives of the study.

Table 1. *The Attitudes of Residents in FPA Toward Filipino Humor During Flooding*

Codes	Themes
A1. Normalizing the jokes	Perception of Filipino Humor as Socially Acceptable Practice
A2. Accepting the use of Filipino Humor	
A3. Approving the use of Filipino Humor	
A4. Laughing off the situation	Means for Adaptation
A5. Supporting adaptation	
A6. Triggering social interaction	Catalyst for Collective Joy
A7. Fostering positive emotions	

Based on the thematic analysis conducted, the attitudes of residents in FPA towards Filipino humor during flooding were determined through four key themes: (1) *perception of Filipino humor as socially acceptable practice*, (2) *means for adaptation*, and (3) *catalyst for collective joy*.

The first theme that emerged is “Perception of Filipino Humor as Socially Acceptable Practice” which reflects the attitudes of participants in FPA, who approve and accept the utilization of Filipino humor. Even during flooding, the participants normalized the use of Filipino humor as this helps them to remain happy. It is perceived as a way to reframe negative experiences and as an effective response in making their situation manageable. This is supported by the following statements:

"That's actually better than taking things too seriously." (*Mainam pa nga po 'yun kasi kaysa seryosohin nila masyadong ano.*)

"They have no choice but to be happy and humorous" (*Wala na silang ibang choice kundi maging masaya na lang, maging palabiro na lang.*)

Further insights from the participants emphasize that Filipino humor enables them to reframe flood-related problems as positive, viewing it as a way to regulate their emotional distress caused by flooding. This is supported by the following statement:

“Because they’re already stressed and already dealing with problems caused by the flood. If they keep thinking about the flooding and its effects on their livelihood, they would only become more burned out. So, they choose to be humorous instead. And they choose to just keep going as well.” (*Kasi nga-parang stress na nga sila may problema na nga sila doon sa baha. Kung isipin pa nila yung pagbaha atsaka yung epekto nito doon sa kabuhayan nila, mas lalo lang silang ma b-burn out. So, mas pinipili nalang nilang maging mapagbiro. Tapos, mas pinipili nalang nilang magpatuloy nalang din.*)

The second theme that emerged is “Means for Adaptation.” This theme highlights how participants adjust to their challenging situation due to flooding through Filipino humor. Rather than focusing on the stress brought by the effects of flooding, they utilize Filipino humor to endure their current flood-related condition. This theme is supported by the following statement:

“That’s how Filipinos are, right? We just laugh it off instead of stressing over what’s happening.” (*Ganun naman mga Pilipino ‘di ba, tinatawanan lang kaysa intindihin mo ‘yung mga nangyayari*)

The third theme that emerged is “Catalyst for Collective Joy.” This theme highlights the significance of Filipino humor in facilitating interpersonal interaction and fostering positive emotions despite the adversities brought about by flooding. This suggests that Filipino humor encourages collective participation in humorous exchanges. Participants describe how engaging in Filipino humor, particularly by adding to each other’s jokes, transforms distressing circumstances into moments of shared laughter. This is reflected in the following statements:

“The joke made things fun because it feels much lighter when there’s someone joking around” (*Naging masaya din doon sa joke kasi mas gumagaan sa pakiramdam kapag merong nagbibiruan*)

“We just ride along with their jokes.” (*Sasakyan na lang ‘yung joke nila.*)

This theme is further supported by additional insights from the participants, who shared that despite the floodwaters already reaching chest level, they still chose to smile and wave to the cameras of visiting news stations. This emphasizes the participants’ deliberate choice to pursue happiness and positivity despite their circumstances. This is supported by the statement:

“We really act cheerful whenever there’s a camera from ABS-CBN or GMA. Even when the water is already this high (chest level), we still go, “Hi!!” (*Talagang masayahin kami ‘pag mayroong camera na galing ABS-CBN o GMA, nandito na ‘yung tubig (dibdib) “Hi!!”*)

Table 2. The Utilization of Filipino humor in FPA

Codes	Themes
U1. Humor for Banter Purposes	Using Filipino Humor to Lighten Social Interactions
U2. Including humor on Relief Operations	
U3. Lessening the Intensity of the Situation	
U4. Valuing Interpersonal Relationship	Using Filipino Humor to Strengthen Relationships
U5. Engaging in enjoyable social interaction	
U6. Setting Boundaries	Conditional Expression of Filipino Humor
U7. Requiring Cautious Usage	

Based on the thematic analysis conducted, the participants' utilization of Filipino humor in FPA were determined through three key themes: (1) *using Filipino humor to lighten social interactions*, (2) *using Filipino humor to strengthen relationships*, and (3) *conditional expression of Filipino humor*.

The first theme that emerged, which addresses the utilization of Filipino humor, is “Using Filipino Humor to Lighten Social Interactions.” This theme refers to the use of Filipino humor in social interactions

about flooding. Participants describe using Filipino humor when talking to others, particularly during relief distribution and conversation with other residents. Filipino humor is incorporated in their way of communicating, making interactions feel light and comfortable. This theme is supported by the following statements, such as:

“In distributing relief goods. They usually take action, and even during flooding, they try to have a good approach toward the people receiving the help” (“*Magbigay ng mga relief... ah kung baga kumikilos sila kadalasan... para kahit baha maganda yung approach nila sa mga pagbibigyan nila.*”)

“They often use jokes so they can talk to people in a proper and lighter way.” (“*Kung baga mostly sila, nagbibiro sila para makausap ng maayos at ng mas light yung mga tao.*”)

Additional details from probing questions show that Filipino humor makes conversations among residents in the FPA more approachable. They express Filipino humor through spontaneous jokes, which helps them to interact with each other and maintain positivity even during difficult situations. This is supported by the following statements from the participants:

“Even though the situation is difficult at that moment, they try to make things lighter through good interaction and companionship.” (“*Para kahit mahirap ‘yung pinagdadaan during that moment is magaan pa rin ‘yung ah... pamumuhay, pakikisama.*”)

The second theme that emerged is “Using Filipino Humor to Strengthen Relationships.” This theme refers to how Filipino humor occurs within existing relationships and familiar interactions, where participants use Filipino humor as a way to maintain and strengthen social relationships. This is supported by the following statements, such as:

“Nothing really. It’s like you’re still closest to the person you’re joking with. Otherwise, they might get offended.” (“*Wala naman. Parang closest ka pa rin dun sa taong kabiruan mo. Baka mamaya ma-offend sila.*”)

“It’s because with the people we give help to... we already know them well.” (“*Kasi ‘yung relationship kasi nung mga binibigyan namin ano na eh... kabisado na*”)

Additional details from probing questions further emphasize that the participants more commonly used Filipino humor with people they were already familiar with. Because of familiarity and shared experiences, the use of Filipino humor became natural among them, allowing them to further strengthen their relationships. This is supported by the following statement from a participant:

“We just message our friends who joke around, and then we end up laughing along with them.” (“*Mag-message lang kami dun sa mga kaibigan namin nagpapatawa, tatawa na kami*”)

The third theme that emerged is “Conditional Expression of Filipino Humor.” This theme highlights the conditions in expressing Filipino humor depending on its context. Despite the beneficial effects of Filipino humor, participants emphasize that consideration should be given to its use, such as who to joke with and the appropriateness of the situation. This is supported by the following statements from the participants, such as:

“For him it’s just a joke. For us, it’s not.” (“*Siya biro, samin hindi.*”)

“But it really depends on the person who receives the joke.” (“*Pero depende sa tao na tatanggap nung biro niya.*”)

Moreover, additional insights from probing questions emphasize that the state and mood of the person should be considered when joking around with other people. This is seen in the following statements such as:

“Some people get offended.” (“*May mga na o-offend dyan.*”)

“Yes, they get offended if they’re not in the mood to joke.” (“*Oo na o-offend, ‘yung wala siya sa mood na makipagbiruan.*”)

Table 3. The Perceived Psycho-emotional Experiences Among Residents in FPA

Codes	Themes
E1. Accepting the Reality of Flooding	Perception of Normalcy Towards Flooding
E2. Habituating to Flooding	
E3. Promoting Well-Being with Others	
E4. Feeling Positive	Adaptive Psychological Outcomes
E5. Experiencing Intrapersonal Satisfaction	
E6. Point of View Shift on Flooding	Cognitive-Emotional Changes
E7. Unstable Emotional Experiences	

Based on the thematic analysis conducted, the perceived psycho-emotional experiences among residents in FPA, were determined through three key themes: (1) *perception of normalcy towards flooding*, (2) *adaptive psychological outcomes through Filipino humor*, and (3) *cognitive emotional changes*.

The first theme that emerged from the FGD is “Perception of Normalcy towards Flooding.” Since the participants had repeated, prolonged exposure to flooding, they have eventually accepted it as part of their everyday lives. As a result, what is known to be an alarming situation has been internalized as an expected part of life. This normalization reflects both acceptance and habituation, as constant exposure has led to the acceptance of the realities of flooding. This theme is supported by the following statements, such as:

“Well... we’re already used to flooding. It feels like we experience it almost every day.” (“*Kasi ano... sanay na kami sa baha eh. Parang araw-araw nalang namin nararanasan.*”)

“When you go to sleep, there’s water, and when you wake up, there’s still water.” (“*Pag tulog mo may tubig, pag gising mo may tubig.*”)

Further insights reveal that this normalization has also made participants accustomed to both the feeling and the situation of flooding. Consequently, they feel surprised when there is no floodwater upon waking. This means that flooding has become an expected occurrence every day, shaping how residents plan their activities and interact socially. This normalization allows them to adapt and continue daily routines despite the challenges. The following statement from a participant supports this:

“I actually felt strange when there wasn’t any flooding... I even said, “Oh, why isn’t there any water?” (“*Parang nanibago pa nga ako noong walang baha eh... sabi ko ‘Ay, ba’t walang tubig? (baha)...’*”)

The second theme that emerged is “Adaptive Psychological Outcomes through Filipino Humor.” This theme highlights the participants’ ability to maintain a positive outlook despite being surrounded by floodwater. This is made possible through opportunities for social interaction and shared laughter. Rather than constantly focusing on their current situation, these interactions help them shift their attention to other matters beyond flooding. The following statements support this:

“It somehow reduces thinking about the flooding since the attention shifts to other topics.” (“*Mas na le- lessen siguro ‘yung pag i-isip tungkol dun sa baha. Kasi nadadivert sa ibang usapan.*”)

“The stress goes away. We’re able to chat and share stories.” (“*Nawawala ‘yung stress. Nakakapagkwentuhan eh.*”)

“I hope there’s no more flooding tomorrow.” (“*Sana bukas wala na ‘to (baha).*”)

This theme also highlights the intrapersonal satisfaction that the participants gain when their jokes make others laugh. They reported that this sense of fulfilment positively influences their next actions and behaviors. Participants express this through the following statements, such as:

“It’s like when you deliver a joke, and someone laughs—you feel satisfied.” (*“Parang kapag kasi nakapag-deliver ka ng joke tapos may tumawa. Parang satisfied ka.”*)

“You feel satisfied. There’s that moment when, in some way, you were able to help that person. So your attitude becomes more positive, and your next actions or behavior are influenced positively—because there’s a sense of satisfaction. There’s fulfilment.” (*“Parang satisfied ka. May gano’ng moment na kahit papaano nakatulong ka rin doon sa tao. So, positive ‘yung magiging attitude mo, ‘yung magiging next na kilos mo sa behavior mo. Kasi may satisfaction. May fulfilment.”*)

The third theme that emerged is “Cognitive Emotional Changes.” This theme highlights the complex and sometimes contradictory emotions expressed by participants in response to repeated flooding. To elaborate, some participants use Filipino humor to temporarily redirect their attention away from the negative realities of flooding. However, after engaging in social interactions that involve humor, some may return to the present situation and confront the ongoing challenges once again. This suggests that feelings of stress and exhaustion remain persistent despite moments of laughter. This can be observed in the following statements:

“Happy, miserable...when you see the (flood),...they become stressed again.” (“Masayang miserable... kapag makikita mo ‘yung ano (baha)... stress ulit sila.”)

“Because after making people laugh... well, you get tired.” (*“Kasi pagkatapos niyang magpatawa...ano ka na, napagod ka na”*)

Table 4. The Contribution of Filipino humor to Filipinos' Ginhawa

Codes	Themes
C1. Feeling Happy	Positive Emotional Response to Adversity
C2. Finding Fun in Flooding	
C3. Capacity to bring about Emotional Relief	Emergence of Adaptive Cognitive-Emotional Processing
C4. Reframing Flooding to Relief	
C5. Redirecting of thoughts	
C6. Lessening of Stress	Being able to Manifest Coping
C7. Lessening of Sadness	

Based on the thematic analysis conducted, the contribution of Filipino humor to Filipinos' *ginhawa*, were determined through three key themes: (1) *positive emotional response to adversity*, (2) *emergence of adaptive cognitive-emotional processing*, and (3) *being able to manifest coping*.

The first theme that emerged from the FGD is “Positive Emotional Response to Adversity.” This theme is defined by participants’ statements that describe how Filipino humor contributes to *ginhawa* by promoting happiness and enjoyment, even in challenging situations such as flooding. This means that instead of responding solely with stress or frustration, the residents use humor to evoke positive emotions that lighten the adversity caused by flooding. Through shared laughter, flooding is reframed into a manageable and socially engaging experience. This emotional shift fosters collective positivity, enabling individuals to experience *ginhawa* despite ongoing difficulties. This theme is supported by participants' agreement with each other on statements such as the following:

“In short, there is an enjoyment when there is flood...laughter is the best medicine” (*“In short, enjoy kapag may baha....laughter is the best medicine.”*)

"They are happy when there is a flood... they are submerged while drinking, laughing... others even play music." (*"Masaya sila kapag may baha... nakalubog sila habang umiinom, nagtatawanan.... 'yung iba nagmu-music pa."*)

Additional details from the probing questions show that positive emotional responses were further strengthened by shared social activities during flooding. Participants noted that residents would gather, listen to music, eat, and spend time together while submerged in the water along the road. These collective activities help create a positive atmosphere that amplifies feelings of happiness. This shows that Filipino humor, combined with social interaction, enhances *ginhawa* by making flooding more emotionally bearable. This is supported by the following statements, including:

"Yes, sound trip... they are sitting while drinking... some are eating snacks on the road." (*"Yes sound trip... nakaupo sila habang umiinom... may nagpupulatan nasa kalsada."*)

The second theme, "Emergence of Adaptive Cognitive-Emotional Processing," describes how Filipino humor provides a brief but meaningful experience of *ginhawa* during flooding by easing worries and emotional tension. Participants reported that sharing or experiencing humor helps create a sense of inner lightness and calm, allowing them to temporarily set aside the stress and uncertainty caused by flooding. Moreover, it helps redirect their attention to positive interactions and reframe the situation in a less burdensome way, offering short-term relief despite ongoing adversity. This theme was further supported by the following statements, such as:

"It's like... your inner self is relieved when you are able to, uh (make someone laugh)..." (*"Parang ano... guminhawa 'yung kalooban mo kapag nakapag ano (patawa) ka..."*)

"Instead of thinking about whether the water will rise or go down, it is replaced with you being happy; the effects of flooding disappear from the picture because the attention is diverted to another conversation." (*"Kesa isipin mo kung lalaki o bababa 'yung tubig, napapalitan siya na masaya ka, nawawala sa picture 'yung effects ng flooding kasi nga nada-divert sa ibang usapan."*)

Additional insights further highlight this theme, showing that participants view flooding not only as a challenge but also as beneficial, particularly for sustaining basic needs, given that flooding was normalized in their community. For example, participants noted that floods often bring fish, which are shared or made into meals, ensuring that no one goes hungry. This perspective reinforces how Filipino humor, alongside practical adaptations, contributes to short-term *ginhawa* by easing emotional strain and supporting resilience in adverse conditions. This can be seen in the following statements such as:

"Before, and even until now, when it floods, there are fish that come with it... they are just given away... made into a meal... you will not be hungry... just do not be picky." (*"Dati kasi, oh pati hanggang ngayon na rin, kapag kasi bumaha, may kasamang isda... pinamimigay nalang... ginagawang ulam... hindi ka magugutom... huwag ka lang maselan."*)

The third theme, "Being able to Manifest Coping," describes how participants employ Filipino humor as a coping mechanism during flooding to lessen stress and sadness. Participants explained that humor helps reduce feelings of tension and worry, allowing them to temporarily ease the negative emotions associated with the adverse effects of flooding. This is supported by the following statements, such as:

"And also to reduce the, uh... to reduce the stress." (*"At saka para babawasan 'yung ano... babawasan 'yung stress."*)

"Maybe somehow the sadness is lessened, the thinking that the flood has a bad effect." (*"Siguro kahit papano naiibsan 'yung kalungkutan, 'yung pag-iisip na may pangit na epekto 'yung baha."*)

In summary, the codes and themes emerging from the study results address the specific research objectives. The data reveal that Filipino humor plays a crucial role in the overall experiences, perceptions, and coping of the participants with the challenges posed by flooding. Moreover, Filipino humor is widely

perceived as socially acceptable, as evidenced by the participants' normalization, acceptance, and approval of it. Filipino humor also allows them to reframe their negative situations into something positive through their shared teasing, engagement, and laughter. Despite the adversities of flooding, these experiences continue to strengthen their social relationships and share communal laughter.

Although it was evident that Filipino humor enhances their overall being, the participants emphasized that its use must also be guided by consideration for the person, relationship, and situation, as shown in how Filipino humor is embedded in a mindful, shared practice. Looking at the contribution of Filipino humor to *ginhawa*, it was revealed that Filipino humor provides a positive emotional response to adversity, temporary emotional relief, and reduces stress, highlighting comfort despite challenges related to flooding. Collectively, Filipino humor enabled residents in FPA to foster a sense of ease, collective resilience, and adaptation, which, overall, contributed to their *ginhawa*.

DISCUSSION

The present study focuses on the lived experiences of residents in flood-prone area (hereinafter FPA), particularly on how Filipino humor is used amid recurring flooding and how it contributes to their *ginhawa*. Through thematic data analysis, a total of thirteen (13) themes emerged from participants' narratives, reflecting their shared experiences and perspectives on the use of Filipino humor during flooding. The following section presents the discussion of the findings based on these identified themes.

Attitudes of residents in FPA toward Filipino humor during flooding

Residents living in a FPA express a positive attitude towards Filipino humor during flooding. They approve of and accept the use of Filipino humor, even in the face of adversity, and view it as normal, hence regarding it as socially acceptable. Filipino humor helps the participants to stay positive despite the stress brought by flooding. This attitude among the participants can be explained by Sukor et al. (2025), who state that humor serves as a way to react positively to challenging situations, helping them adapt effectively. This shows that Filipino humor allows participants to shift their focus from the stress of flood-related challenges to a humorous perspective, making the situation more manageable. This supports the findings of Schneider et al. (2018), who stated humor fosters psychological resilience and a positive outlook by encouraging a light-hearted approach to life's challenges.

Filipino humor is also perceived as a catalyst for collective joy by fostering interaction among individuals. Filipino humor promotes positive emotions through shared laughter, achieved through collective participation in exchanging jokes and banter. As noted by Martin and Ford (2018), humor is a form of social play and is interactive; thus, it requires interaction between individuals. In line with this, residents' engagement in Filipino humor transforms their distressing circumstances into something positive. Once an individual finds something funny, it produces a behavioral response such as laughter, which can often positively contribute to one's well-being (Martin & Ford, 2018). Since Davis (2022) and Lu (2023) suggested that humor varies across cultures, it is evident that the findings of this study challenge the notion that Asians are overly serious. These findings indicate that Filipino humor is perceived as fostering social interactions and helping residents in FPA cope with their challenging circumstances through shared laughter.

The Utilization of Filipino Humor in FPA

Residents in FPA utilize Filipino humor to make their social interactions feel lighter. Filipino humor is often used in everyday interactions and during relief operations, helping reduce tension and create a comfortable atmosphere even in challenging situations. This confirms Cao et al. (2023), stating that humor facilitates smooth interaction by reducing perceived social distance, making interactions more approachable. In this sense, Filipino humor provides comfort, helping participants communicate naturally. Also, the lightness of Filipino humor helps maintain a positive tone in interactions and encourages individuals to approach conversations more comfortably (Schneider et al., 2018). Thus, this shows that Filipino humor helps to ease tension among participants during flooding and relief distribution.

Beyond lightening social interactions, Filipino humor is also utilized in FPA as a social means of strengthening interpersonal relationships. This aligns with Lara et al. (2025), who regarded Filipino humor as essential for nurturing social connections. With residents in FPA, their shared laughter seems to foster familiarity, strengthening relationships among individuals who have similar flooding experiences. Within their everyday interactions, it acts as a collective resource that reinforces social bonds and provides relief during adversity (Maiolino & Kuiper, 2016). In the Filipino cultural context, values such as *pakikibagay* (adaptability) and *katatagan* (resiliency) shape how Filipino humor is expressed within social relationships, ensuring that humorous interactions reinforce a sense of belongingness rather than creating a division (Lara et al., 2025). The participants' use of Filipino humor during flooding shows how they relate with others and acknowledge their shared experiences, reflecting *pakikibagay*. In addition, participants' ability to still find Filipino humor despite the recurring challenges of flooding demonstrates *katatagan*, as Filipino humor helps them to manage their situation. Thus, it indicates that Filipino humor is not just an entertainment, as it allows individuals to feel connected even during flooding.

Although Filipino humor helps individuals to lighten their social interactions and strengthen their relationships, participants also show that its utilization has certain conditions. Martin and Ford (2018) stated that humor may vary across cultures and social groups; hence, its interpretation may vary as well, emphasizing the importance of situational context. Guided by the findings of Kaya & Yağın, (2022) and Ibrahim (2022), humor may still be prone to insensitivity and harm and may cause damage to others when used inappropriately. For the humor to be acceptable, participants consider not only the person they are joking with and their mood, but also the nature of their relationship. Including the familiarity and shared experiences as these influence how Filipino humor is received. In addition, participants also consider the context, including shared social and cultural norms which determine how Filipino humor is understood and whether it is perceived as appropriate or offensive. This reflects the principles of Benign Violation Theory (hereinafter BVT) by McGraw and Warren (2010), which emphasizes psychological distance, as participants were more likely to use Filipino humor with people they were familiar with. Familiarity allows them to measure how a joke would be received, reducing the risk of conflict. This indicates that Filipino humor is used with consideration to avoid conflicts and maintain positive interactions. Moreover, BVT explains that humor arises when a situation violates social norms yet is simultaneously perceived as benign or harmless. If a violation is harmful rather than benign, it may lead to offense or conflict.

The perceived psycho-emotional experiences among residents in an FPA

The residents in FPA report being accustomed to the situation and to the feeling of being surrounded by flooding. The experience of flooding is considered normal for the participants, as they have already become used to it. They even express great surprise whenever they do not see any floodwater, further validating how flooding has become part of their daily lives. This is because their geographical location is considered one of the most flood-prone areas in Bulacan (Ohara et al., 2018; PDRRMO, Bulacan, n.d.). Moreover, instead of focusing on the reality of flooding, most of them choose positivity through gathering on the streets and outside their houses to interact and throw jokes with one another, supporting the finding of Bryant et al. (2016), who stated that people most likely engage in humor and express laughter when they are with others whom they are close to.

Participants report that eliciting laughter among others eases the shared burden of living in an FPA, highlighting a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment through engaging in Filipino humor amid adversity. This supports the findings of Licuanan (1994, as cited in Benitez, 2022), which state that the Filipino spirit is bound by its light-hearted approach to life and its challenges, and that positive interpersonal relationships signify an overall state of life satisfaction and well-being.

Beyond happiness and satisfaction, cognitive and emotional changes were evident within the residents of FPA after utilizing Filipino humor, even amidst the flooding they experienced. Even though they have established that they perceive their situation as normal, after their use of Filipino humor, it will bring them back in touch with the realities of flooding's negative effects. That is why these moments of humor are not seen as a permanent solution. After engaging in social interactions, residents inevitably return to the reality of the situation and confront the distress, discomfort, and practical challenges brought about by the flooding. This

reflects a natural human response—while humor provides temporary relief, it does not erase the underlying emotional impacts (Beckers et al., 2023; Songcayaon et al., 2020). Instead, Filipino humor allows individuals to acknowledge and process these feelings in a less burdensome manner.

The contribution of Filipino humor to Filipinos' *ginhawa*

Flooding is known to be a destructive natural disaster that may negatively affect an individual's well-being (Asim et al., 2022; Escobar-Carias et al., 2022). However, for residents in FPA, their experience of using Filipino humor enables them to reframe flooding as an emotionally manageable experience. Rather than responding solely with frustration or helplessness, participants describe how laughter, followed by roadside gatherings, fosters positive affect even while submerged in floodwaters. This emotional reframing views flooding not only as a disruption but also as an opportunity for social bonding, which is common in a collectivist country like the Philippines (Ancheta, 2021; Licuanan, 1994, as cited in Benitez, 2022), and is reflected in their perceived resiliency (Lara et al., 2025; Schneider et al., 2018).

The abovementioned finding suggests that *ginhawa* is not necessarily the absence of hardship but the presence of positive affect despite hardship (Bautista, 2024). Through Filipino humor, participants experience collective positivity, which lightens the emotional weight of flooding. This is consistent with one of the manifestations of experiencing *ginhawa*, which is lightness (*gaan*) in carrying the challenges of life (Bautista, 2024). Moreover, the shared laughter reflects how emotional experiences are socially constructed and strengthened within a group. Thus, Filipino humor functions adaptively by helping residents regulate emotional distress, strengthen social connections, and cope with the recurring challenges of flooding, serving as a communal process that transforms distress into shared lightness, consistent with one of the manifestations of shared *ginhawa*.

Among the two dimensions of *ginhawa* determined by Rungduin et al. (2025), *ginhawang panloob* is more evident in this study, as participants emphasize internal lightness when they make others laugh or engage in humorous exchanges. Because of this, Filipino humor is utilized to divert attention from worries such as rising water levels. This redirection suggests that Filipino humor quickly and positively realigns their sense of *ginhawa* by reducing the distress caused by flooding.

The collective narrative of the participants suggests that the experience of *ginhawa* may differ depending on the situation. This study shows that Filipino humor does not totally remove the structural problems that cause flooding, but rather provides a brief breathing experience, which can be rooted in the conceptualization of Paz (2008, as cited in Rungduin et al., 2025) of *ginhawa*, which elaborates the notion of *ginhawa* in terms of breathing. Moreover, this aligns with the Relief Theory (Spencer, 1860, as cited in Martin & Ford, 2018), which suggests that humor reduces the psychological tension associated with anxious thoughts. This is observed in the behavioral response of laughter, which, in this study, is understood to replace tension with brief emotional relief. However, *pakikipagkapwa* — the Filipino value of togetherness and shared identity — challenges the said theory, arguing that humor also plays a role, not just as an individual-focused way of coping, but involves other people through interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, it demonstrates its communal concept, where emotional burdens are lightened through social connections, enhancing solidarity. Thus, participants' subjective experience of *ginhawa* reflects an adaptive emotional strategy that protects individuals from being overwhelmed by stress associated with flooding.

Residents in the FPA recognize Filipino humor as an intentional coping mechanism. Their lived experiences explicitly indicate that Filipino humor reduces stress and lessens sadness. The residents consciously use jokes and laughter to manage tension and mitigate negative thoughts brought the adverse impacts of flooding. This finding aligns with the notion that Filipino humor serves as a coping mechanism for life's stresses (Lara et al., 2025; Menéndez-Aller et al., 2019). However, this study specifically identifies a context in which Filipino humor serves as a coping mechanism amid flooding. This can be seen in how Filipino humor allows residents in the FPA to reinterpret distressing events while simultaneously releasing emotional tension. By reducing stress and easing sadness, Filipino humor helps restore psychological well-being. In this sense, *ginhawa* represents an emotional balance achieved not by denying adversity but by responding to it more positively.

The Filipino Value of Resiliency

The abovementioned findings seem to reflect the value of resiliency for Filipinos. Resiliency is often understood as the capacity of individuals and communities to endure and adapt in the face of recurring adversities such as flooding (Lv et al., 2024). In the Philippine context, this value is commonly reflected in people's continued movement forward despite difficult circumstances (Garay et al., 2020). The study shows that participants' experiences indicate resilience is expressed not only through survival but also through everyday practices that help maintain *ginhawa*. That is why Filipino humor appears to function as one of these practices. Through shared laughter and interaction with others, residents can temporarily ease the emotional burden of flooding. Such moments allow them to reframe their experiences and maintain a more hopeful outlook despite the challenges they face. Moreover, the communal nature of Filipino humor strengthens interpersonal relationships and social support, further sustaining both personal and interpersonal *ginhawa*. In this sense, resiliency among the participants is reflected not only in their ability to endure flooding but also in the ways they find meaning, connection, and emotional relief amid difficult situations.

Implications

The current study contributes to a better understanding of Filipino humor as a source of *ginhawa* among residents living in FPA. Findings show that participants who experienced flooding utilized Filipino humor in their daily conversations. Despite the adverse effects of flooding, they were able to perceive these experiences as less threatening through shared humorous interactions. This is further facilitated by close interpersonal relationships, such as with family and friends, which allow them to take the situation more lightly. However, participants also noted that Filipino humor must be used with caution to avoid turning the situation into a sole violation. Consequently, these findings support the Benign Violation Theory in the context of FPA, as humor arises when distressing situations are reframed as acceptable within a social context shaped by familiarity and shared experiences.

While the findings appear to support the Relief Theory by showing that Filipino humor provides temporary *ginhawa*, this perspective may be limited if it focuses solely on individual emotional release. The communal nature of Filipino humor—especially as expressed through *pakikipagkapwa*—suggests that humor is not just about reducing personal tension but also about reinforcing social bonds and shared resilience. Rather than serving only as an individual coping mechanism, shared laughter in the face of flooding helps foster collective *ginhawa* and a sense of belonging, highlighting that Filipino humor is fundamentally a relational and communal process. Thus, the role of humor goes beyond providing brief relief; it actively strengthens solidarity and collective well-being among residents confronting adversity.

In the field of psychology, the findings indicate that Filipino humor, as a coping mechanism, plays a vital role in how residents in FPA manage emotional stress, especially during flooding. Its use reflects how residents view their experiences more lightly through shared laughter, emphasizing its role in supporting emotional regulation and offering relief in stressful times.

The study further offers insights into how Filipino humor functions within social settings during flooding. The use of Filipino humor is shaped by situational awareness, relationships, and what is deemed appropriate in a given context. This indicates that Filipino humor is a socially guided interaction that helps maintain social bonds and ease tension. Since the findings show that residents in FPA recognize the value of Filipino humor in finding *ginhawa*, this does not mean Filipino humor should be seen as the only solution to flooding problems. Instead, the study highlights how Filipino humor can serve as a supportive social resource, helping residents temporarily achieve *ginhawa*. Support from the local barangay and government, along with the implementation of concrete flood mitigation measures, should be prioritized over reliance on temporary coping strategies.

In a broader context, Filipino humor functions as a culturally embedded approach in dealing with challenges among Filipinos. When used with awareness of situation and context, it may help strengthen interpersonal relationships, demonstrating its relevance as an adaptive resource during flooding. Finally, the study implies that Filipino humor contributes as a source of temporary *ginhawa* in FPA. It highlights the

importance of humorous interactions in helping residents manage emotional stress during flooding, even for a short period, while also recognizing that long-term *ginhawa* — through addressing institutional, structural, and environmental factors — must be prioritized to address the challenges residents in FPA face. These findings also align with SDG No. 3, suggesting that Filipino humor can support well-being but cannot serve as a long-term *ginhawa*.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on Filipino humor in FPA and its contribution to *ginhawa*. It shows that residents in FPA have a positive attitude towards using Filipino humor during flooding. They see Filipino humor as socially acceptable, helping them reframe negative flood experiences into more manageable ones and fostering social bonds. This challenges the idea that humor only helps residents forget their flooding problems. Instead, Filipino humor is a way to adapt to the effects of flooding. The results also show that Filipino humor is used to lighten social interactions. However, it highlights the importance of using humor with caution and in an appropriate way to avoid misinterpretation and keep interactions positive. These findings suggest that Filipino humor strengthens social bonds and helps maintain a positive outlook amid the stress of flooding.

Due to the ongoing flooding in FPA, residents have developed a normalized perception of floods as part of their daily lives. This attitude is further reflected in their acceptance of the reality of flooding. However, the psycho-emotional state of the residents shows that worries and fears still remain, as conflicts between their thoughts and feelings are still evident even after using Filipino humor. This suggests that Filipino humor offers only temporary relief, easing the emotional burden of flooding. Although this relief is short-lived and residents eventually face the realities again, Filipino humor helps them process and acknowledge their emotions in a lighter manner. This suggests that Filipino humor offers a short-term yet meaningful way to cope with the stress of flooding.

Residents in FPA feel a sense of inner lightness when engaging in Filipino humor while interacting with others, as reflected by the concept of *ginhawang panloob*. This indicates that engaging in Filipino humor allows residents to experience a collective positivity that alleviates emotional burdens caused by flooding, through strengthened social bonds and shared laughter, significantly contributing to the feeling of *ginhawa*. Through these experiences, it is clear that the residents display an adaptive humor style, as Filipino humor positively influences their responses to flooding. Furthermore, Filipino humor acts as an internal coping mechanism for residents in FPA, helping them approach their situation with a positive outlook by reducing stress and sadness. Filipino humor does not completely eliminate the realities and emotional tension caused by the adverse impacts. However, it enables residents to breathe easier and provides temporary emotional relief. Therefore, beyond entertainment, Filipino humor serves as a communal, adaptive, emotional strategy that fosters temporary *ginhawa* during times of adversity.

Though Filipino humor appears to provide only momentary relief from stress, difficulties, and emotional tension, it is important to note that it is neither a replacement nor a concrete solution to flooding, but rather an adaptive practice that aims to foster *ginhawa* and communal support. Hence, the study concludes that real *ginhawa* lies in addressing the root causes of flooding rather than relying solely on temporary relief.

Limitations

While this study offers new insights, it acknowledges its limitations and suggests areas for future research to better understand the varied experiences of using Filipino humor and the concept of Filipinos' *ginhawa*. These limitations underscore the importance of further research to deepen understanding of Filipino humor across diverse contexts in the Philippines. Key recommendations for future research include: (1) broadening geographical scope, particularly exploring the other FPA in the Philippines; (2) examining the experiences of younger individuals or adolescents to understand how Filipino humor is perceived and utilized across different age groups; and (3) considering other community strategies in producing *ginhawa* amidst persistent flooding, like *kwentuhan*, *harutan*, or others; Additional insights into these variables shape residents' experiences of using Filipino humor in FPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The patterns that emerged from this study offer valuable insights into how Filipino humor enhances the *ginhawa* of residents in FPA. Based on these findings, the following recommendations aim to deepen the understanding of Filipino humor and its role in community resilience and well-being.

Practical Recommendation

Residents in FPAs frequently incorporate Filipino humor into their daily conversations, often with close friends and family. However, its use can sometimes be misunderstood or accidentally cause harm. To address this, it is recommended that community seminars or workshops be organized to raise awareness of the positive and negative impacts of Filipino humor, and to promote its responsible and sensitive use. Such educational initiatives can empower community members to harness humor as a tool for fostering connection and well-being, while minimizing the risk of misuse.

For mental health professionals, the findings underscore the value of Filipino humor as both a temporary emotional relief and an adaptive practice that builds communal support in disaster contexts. The reported emergence of adaptive cognitive-emotional processing highlights the unique role of humor in reframing stressful experiences and fostering resilience. Filipino humor thus emerges as a protective psychosocial factor that can be meaningfully integrated into community-based and disaster-response interventions. These insights can inform the development of mental health strategies and programs embedded in the cultural context of flood-prone communities.

In addition to these recommendations, future initiatives should prioritize FPA residents' psychological well-being, building on their demonstrated resilience and positive outlook despite frequent flooding. The study's findings can also inform larger-scale efforts, such as targeted government programs, to support Filipino residents in FPAs. Policymakers are encouraged to provide concrete, sustained institutional support to promote both immediate and long-term *ginhawa* among affected communities.

Direction for Future Research

Future research should expand its geographic scope beyond Bulacan, allowing for comparative analysis across various regions to uncover both shared and unique patterns in the use of Filipino humor during adversity. Researchers should also examine different forms of Filipino humor—such as wordplay, satire, contextual, and generational humor—to determine their specific impacts on *ginhawa*. In addition, integrating the sector of younger generations and other underrepresented groups will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how humor functions as a coping mechanism and facilitator of resilience across diverse age groups and cultural backgrounds. Finally, interdisciplinary approaches combining psychological, sociological, and cultural perspectives are encouraged to deepen insights into the multifaceted role of humor in Filipino communities.

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