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A Narrative Inquiry into the Meaning of Smoking among Farmworkers in Southern Philippines

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Abstract

Cigarette smoking is recognized as a global health threat. By the same token, it remains highly prevalent in low and middle-income families like farmworkers, despite efforts by the government and private health agencies to prevent smoking. Thus, this study explored the meaning of smoking among farmworkers and how the meanings reproduced their tenets while living in a farming community. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study that qualitatively investigated the smoking phenomenon among farmworkers in a rural area in Southern Philippines—a topic that has not been treated in much detail in the literature. The research framework used in this work is the socio-cultural tradition (SCT) of communication theory, which theorizes communication as the (re)production of the social order. Using narrative inquiry, the study delved into the seven narratives of farmworker-participants about the meaning of smoking. Individual open interviews were conducted among the participants to elicit stories relative to their experience with smoking. The data were analyzed through re-storying and narrative thematic analysis, yielding five themes constituting their meaning of smoking that reproduced a new social order. Results showed that smoking is (1) a parent and peer influence, (2) a means to manage negative feelings and emotions, (3) a thought-provoker and organizer, (4) a culture among friends, and (5) an integral part of life. All these meanings consequently formed and reinforced a new social order, seemingly an indestructible barrier to smoking cessation. Anchored on SCT, it can be surmised that farmworkers' tenets, while living in their community, were reproduced by these meanings of smoking that governed their lives.

Keywords: farmworkers, meaning-making, smoking, Narrative Inquiry, the Philippines

Cigarette smoking causes deleterious effects on health. It is inextricably linked to the development of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, cancer, and other health risks, including reproductive health issues (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Furthermore, WHO claims that tobacco is responsible for over 8 million deaths each year through direct and second-hand smoke (World Health Organization, 2023). During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, smoking exacerbates the situation by promoting the spread of the virus through the gathering of smokers and sharing of cigarettes (Xie et al., 2021). Correspondingly, numerous scholars have provided empirical pieces of evidence showing a strong association between smoking and COVID-19 severity, thus increasing the likelihood of death (Dessie & Zewotir, 2021; Grundy et al., 2020; Haddad et al., 2021; Harrison et al., 2021; Mohsin et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2021).

Despite the facts above and the efforts of WHO to counter the smoking epidemic, such as the adoption of the organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by 182 member states, smoking remains highly prevalent worldwide. In 2019, approximately 1.14 billion people were regular smokers (Reitsma et al., 2021), which increased to 1.8 billion in 2020 (Dai et al., 2022). Reitsma et al. (2021) and Dai et al. (2022) noted a slight decrease in global smoking prevalence, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). However, the WHO (2023) highlights that in 2020, LMICs constituted 80% of the world's tobacco users (1.3 billion), including the Philippines. Reitsma et al. (2021) disclosed that the Philippines was among the top 10 countries with the largest tobacco users in 2019. According to Punzalan et al. (2013), tobacco prevalence in the country is mostly constituted by males aged 20-29 years old, which aligns with the recent findings by Yen & Tan (2021) and Yamaguchi et al. (2021). Rural dwellers constitute a higher proportion of current smokers (Punzalan et al., 2013).

The preceding case is also true in a rural area in Southern Philippines, wherein smoking is particularly observed among male farmworkers. Consequently, this raises questions about the effectiveness of the anti-smoking efforts by the Philippine national government, namely, the Sin Tax Law (Republic Act No. 10351), which restructures the excise tax on alcohol and tobacco products, and the Graphic Health Warnings (GHW) Law (Republic Act No. 10643), requiring picture-based warnings on cigarette packs; and the ordinance by the local government unit that bans the use, sale distribution, and advertisement of cigarettes and other tobacco products in certain places, and imposes penalties for violations. The unsuccessful attempt of the local ordinance may be attributable to its poor implementation, while the GHW Law might be insufficient to convince the farmworkers to quit smoking. However, the Sin Tax Law that is responsible for increasing the price of cigarettes should have long discouraged farmworkers with meager earnings from continuing smoking; surprisingly, the opposite appears to be the case.

Filipino farmers, whose nature of work is the same as that of the farmworkers, are key players in addressing the country's food security. However, they are aging (Palis, 2020), necessitating the adoption of a healthy lifestyle to increase their life expectancy. Farmers are frequently exposed to hazardous chemicals from pesticides, possibly associated with the increasing prevalence of respiratory tract and muscle symptoms (Sapbamrer & Nata, 2014) and significant reductions in labor productivity (Pingali et al., 1994). These health risks can be potentially exacerbated by smoking. Hence, considering that the interpretation of experiences can vary from person to person (Ongkiko & Flor, 2003), the aforementioned points underscore the urgency of conducting a study on how farmworkers perceive smoking in their lives. Such a study is essential for obtaining nuanced and in-depth information that can aid in developing or improving smoking cessation campaigns to enhance their lifestyle. To this end, the present study aimed to explore the meaning of smoking among farmworkers. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first qualitative study that looked into smoking through the lens of the socio-cultural communication tradition. Also, the smoking phenomenon has not been treated in much detail among these types of participants in the country. The majority of the published studies involving similar participants are international in provenance. In China and Indonesia, smoking is

viewed by farmers as a sign of friendship, commonly offered during social gatherings, and as a means of social control that predominantly maintains a social relationship— these are the major underlying factors affecting smoking behavior (Mao et al., 2014; Swatan et al., 2020).

For young people (adolescents and college students), fitting in with peers is a key motivator for smoking across countries like Scotland (Amos & Bostock, 2007), the United States (Subramaniam et al., 2015), Mexico (Thrasher & Bentley, 2006), and Bangladesh (Markham et al., 2001). Sharing cigarettes fosters connection and social interaction (Markham et al., 2001; Sæbø et al., 2017; Thrasher & Bentley, 2006), and a US study even suggests it helps build bonds among young adults (Onen & Watson, 2021). Curiosity is another common reason for initial smoking, particularly in Pakistan (Anjum et al., 2016). Image projection also plays a role, with masculinity and rebellion associated with smoking for young men in China (Hsia & Spruijt-Metz, 2003) and Indonesia (Ng et al., 2007), while some young women might associate it with independence or a glamorous image, as seen in US research (Eckerdt & Corradi-Webster, 2010). Notably, cultural norms and religion can influence these perceptions. For instance, smoking might not be socially acceptable for youth in Turkey (Yüksel & Corbett, 2005) and for Bangladeshi adolescents living in the UK (Markham et al., 2001).

Similar social aspects hold true for adult women. Smoking can be a tool for connection in the UK (Humphreys et al., 2011) and Australia (Greaves, 2015), and in some cases, project an image of independence or rebellion, as observed in these same countries (Eckerdt & Corradi-Webster, 2010; Greaves, 2015). The Australian study also suggests that some women see it as a way to manage negative emotions (Greaves, 2015).

Theoretical Lens

Through the lens of the socio-cultural communication tradition by Craig (1999), which theorizes communication as the (re)production of the social order, the study assumed that farmworkers have created tenets in living in a farming community through the meanings they give to smoking. This tradition sees communication as a symbolic process that produces, maintains, repairs and transforms reality (Carey, 1989). Here, communication is theorized by considering the society, structure, practice, ritual, rule, socialization, culture, identity, and co-construction of reality. It is assumed that in this tradition, each individual is formed by society and has a unique culture. Its social actions have unintended effects (Craig, 1999). Therefore, the meanings that members of the community are made possible through interaction. The shared meanings led to a new social order that community members had created.

Methodology

Authors' Positionality

As the father of the first author, who was a farmworker and a heavy smoker, died of a heart attack, understanding the epistemological roots of smoking among smokers had been a recurring concern. What is their belief about smoking? Knowing its detrimental effects on health and the seeming addiction to the practice had consciously built the ontological assumption that it cannot be stopped overnight. While campaigns to stop smoking have been conducted, understanding why smokers continue to ignore these efforts remains a mystery. This is why the meanings of smoking became a significant axiological interest. What values do smokers develop?

Research Design

This study followed a qualitative research design, particularly the narrative approach or inquiry, to understand and capture the points of view of participants about smoking. Narrative inquiry falls within social constructivism (Ntinda, 2019) and socio-cultural tradition; it opines that people learn and develop through participation in social activities in the world (Moen, 2006). This type of inquiry

is geared towards revealing people's (the storyteller) meanings of their experiences (culture, historical experiences, identity, and lifestyle) with emphasis on storied experience (Salkind, 2010). In other words, the narrative approach aims to unpack narratives or stories of people's lives, which they tell in their own words and grounded in their worlds (Kim & Latta, 2009; Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Hence, the stories serve as the raw data (McAdams, 2009), obtained from small samples of participants or small groups (Salkind, 2010).

Participants

A purposeful sampling method was used in choosing the participants with the following criteria: farmworker who (1) is a smoker, (2) lives in the study area in Southern Philippines, (3) is of legal age, (4) has been tilling the farm for at least five years, and (5) is willing and available to participate in the study. The use of a purposeful selection of participants based on the criteria ensured that they were knowledgeable about or had experience with the phenomenon of interest, that is, smoking (Creswell & Clark, 2011), and that their shared meanings created a subculture among farmworkers.

Data Collection Process and Ethical Considerations

The first author obtained permission to conduct the study by writing the Barangay Captain and Purok President. After gaining approval, the identified farmworkers who met the inclusion criteria were visited in their homes and invited to participate in the study. Before data collection (open interviews and storytelling), which was conducted according to participants' preferred schedules and venues, the first author obtained informed consent from the participants by having them sign a consent form. This form was treated as an agreement between the researchers and the participants. Additionally, the first author verbally explained the details of the consent form to the participants. Their participation was purely voluntary; hence, they were told that they could back out anytime at any stage without giving a reason and without cost or penalty. Also, it was ensured that the participants were not harmed during the research process. Their personal information (names and addresses) remained confidential—they were not written and indicated in this study or published elsewhere. The first author was born and raised in the research locale, which he considers his permanent address and where his family resides. As a result, he is quite familiar with the way of life of the participants. However, he made a conscious effort to set aside any preconceived notions or assumptions to avoid negative impacts on the study results.

It was ensured that the health protocols concerning COVID-19 were followed, and all participants were vaccinated. As an introduction to the storytelling session, encouraging the participants to tell their stories, the first author told them, "I am interested in hearing your story about your smoking experience, particularly regarding the situations when you need to smoke." Follow-up questions were then thrown at them when there were points from their answers needing elaboration and clarification. Further questions were also asked when necessary to expand on a part of their story or to fill in a gap thereon (Stott & Priest, 2018) by following the wording, ordering, and phrasing of the participants (Scheffelaar et al., 2021). The present study aimed to provide maximum information on the phenomenon; hence, data collection was stopped when data saturation was achieved; no new information was forthcoming (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The entire interview and storytelling session, which lasted from 18 to 45 minutes, was audio-taped.

Data Analysis

Two-phased data analysis was employed: problem-solution re-storying approach (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002) and narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008). Restorying included transcribing the audiotaped interview and storytelling session, translating the transcripts from Cebuano to English, reading and re-reading the transcripts to get a sense of the data, identifying the elements of plot structure (characters, setting, problem, actions, events/attempts, and resolution) by color-coding the transcripts, and lastly, sequencing the events for the transcript to make sense. During the narrative

thematic analysis, the re-storied stories with common plotlines, including those relevant responses with no narrative structure, were grouped into the same themes or categories (Tarzia et al., 2020). The validity of the analyses was ensured by having the original transcripts and re-storied stories, and the overall results were checked multiple times by both authors and two other experts in the field of communication.

Limitations of the Study

The study focused on the meaning-making of smoking based on the farmworkers' stories. It was limited to the views of seven participants while sufficient for narrative inquiry. It may not be generalizable, but it could give a glimpse of the reproduction of a new social order. As well, the reliance on self-reported data may be biased, as participants might underreport or overreport their smoking experiences. Lastly, the study focused on the meanings associated with smoking and did not interrogate how the smoking culture became the norm among farmworkers.

Results and Discussion

A total of seven farmworkers participated in the study. Their sociodemographic information is presented in Table 1. The youngest was 30, while the oldest was 55. All of them were male, mostly high school graduates and married. Their length of farm work (rice, corn, and vegetable cultivation) ranged from 10 to 36 years. Farmworkers typically consumed two packs of cigarettes every day. Based on the classification made by Wilson et al. (1992), the farmworkers fall under the "heavy smokers" category since they puff cigarettes more than 25 cigarettes per day. Interestingly, all of them started smoking in their teenage years, which accords well with Esteban-Ipac & Torres-Ticzon (2022), who disclosed that Filipino adolescents start to smoke at 12-13 years old, and Reitsma et al. (2021), who found that smoking initiation occurred at ages that range from 14 to 25 years among young people in 204 countries.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Profile of the Farmworkers

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Highest educational attainment	Marital status	Years in farm working	Estimated daily cigarette consumption	Smoking initiation
Anton	55	Male	High school graduate	Married	36	2 packs	Teenage years
Ben	33	Male	High school graduate	Married	10	2 packs	Teenage years
Caloy	30	Male	High school graduate	Married	10	1 pack	Teenage years
Dionicio	34	Male	High school graduate	Married	8	1 pack	Teenage years
Eduardo	37	Male	High school graduate	Married	22	2 packs	Teenage years
Felimon	33	Male	Elementary level	Single	33	10 sticks	Teenage years
Gibo	41	Male	High school level	Married	20	2 packs	Teenage years

The findings illuminated various facets of meanings that emerged from the farmworkers' experiences with smoking. Five themes sprang from the analyses, constituting the meaning of smoking among the farmworkers: a parent and peer's influence, a means to manage negative feelings and emotions, a thought provoker and organizer, a culture among friends, and an integral part of life.

A Parent and Peer's Influence

Farmworkers reported histories of smoking, which typically began during their teenage years. In their responses, they emphasized that factors such as growing up in social environments where smoking was prevalent influenced their initiation into smoking. Specifically, living with smoker parents and being surrounded by smoker peers were cited as instrumental in both starting and continuing to smoke. While their parents did not explicitly encourage them to smoke, their exposure to parental smoking subtly conveyed permission to engage in the activity. Additionally, when caught smoking for the first time, their parents did not reprimand them, further reinforcing the notion that smoking was acceptable at their age. As Anton (pseudonym) put it, he "inherited" smoking from his ancestors.

Murag nasunod man gud na sa among kaliwat. Akong mama ug papa mga manigarilyohay gyod to sila sa una. Maong katong gakakita nako nga gapanigarilyo sila, murag wala koy gakakita nga problema. Maong akong gihunahuna nga okay ra diay manigarilyo, samot na nga di man sad sila gapabaya sa amoa unya gapaningkamot sad sila para mahatag among mga panginahanglan. Mao ganing pagkasapon nila sa akoa nga gapanigarilyo, wala ko nila kasab-i. Niingon ra man gani sila nga 'hinay-hinaya lang kay gaeskuyla pa ka... Kung magdesisyon ka nga mupadayon aning bisyoha pareha sa amo, okay ra basta inyong pag-eskuyla, di lang nimo biyaan.' So okay ra gyod sa ilaha. Wala man ingon nga nakatilaw ko'g kasaba sa ila kay tungod ana, wala gyod. Human ato, naay mga higayon nga tagaan gyod ko's akong papa og duha ka stick, paipitan niya sa akong notebook ayha ko muadto'g eskuylahan kay di man lagi kapalit og sigarilyo, akong allowance kay gamay raman lagi sa una, piso, uno singkwenta, ana. Ako rang tultolon ang sigarilyo sa akong notebook kada buntag. (Anton)

[TRANSLATION]

It seemed we inherited smoking from our descendants. My father and mother were smokers before. When I saw them smoking, I did not see any problem. So I thought it was okay to smoke, especially since they took care of us and strived hard to provide for our needs. So, by the time my parents caught me smoking, they did not reprimand or scold me. Instead, they only said, 'You take it slowly since you are still studying... if you decide to continue doing this vice just like what we do, it is okay as long as you do not take your studies for granted.' So, it was really okay for them. I have never experienced being scolded by them. After that confrontation, there were times that my father left me with two cigarettes in between the leaves of my notebook before I went to school since my allowance was only a peso or one peso and 50 centavos. I just looked for the cigarettes in my notebook every morning.

Farmworkers recounted how they were influenced by their friends to smoke. During the interviews, they disclosed that, in addition to parental influence, their peers who smoked also encouraged them to try smoking for the first time. For instance, Gibo (pseudonym) mentioned that his friends told him to "try" it. Similarly, Anton emphasized the pervasive influence of peer pressure, stating, *Tanan man gyod moinom, mosigarilyo. Makaimpluwensya gyod ang barkada. Kay kung unsa imong makita sa imong barkada, masunod gyod nimo* (All were drinking, smoking. Friends were also influential. Because what you see from your friends, you always follow). He then shared a personal story about how he was influenced by his high school friends to smoke.

Katong hayskol pa ko, nakabarkada ko'g mga manginomay ug manigarilyohay pareha anang Juan [pseudonym] nga naa gapuyo karon diha's pikas barangay. Ila kung gitagaan og sigarilyo, ingon sila 'tilawi ni kay total laki man ta ug mao mani atong kinabuhi. Imong papa manigarilyohay pod.' Kada tingpaniudto, kanang human mi'g paniudto, moinom mi ug manigarilyo sa tindahan nilang Neneng [pseudonym]. Pagbalik ana's klasi mga ala-una, aw sakto na kaayo among karga. (Anton)

While Anton's high school friends were influential in his initiation into smoking, it can also be inferred that they used his father, a smoker, as a model to justify smoking as a masculine behavior. They likely portrayed smoking as acceptable, given that it was part of their male identity, much like Anton's father, who embodied this norm through smoking. In essence, his friends may have pointed to his father as an example of how men typically smoke, thereby reinforcing the notion that smoking was a normal part of masculinity. Therefore, the image of his father as a smoker was crucial in shaping his friends' perception of smoking, which they then used to encourage Anton to smoke. Meanwhile, Ben (pseudonym) also shared an anecdote about how his friends introduced him to smoking.

Atong ulitawo pa ko, gipailaila ko's akong mga barkada sa sigarilyo. Kapila gyod ka beses nga ila ko'ng testingan og tudlo pero wa gyod ko. Wa gyod ko nagpatintal. Dayon niabot sa time nga akong gitingingan sa balay nga wala sila kay gakatingala ko. Hangtod nga naadik ko. Gapangitaon na pirmi sa akong ginhawa, unya nagsugod na dayon ko'g uban-uban sa akong mga barkada. (Ben)

Interestingly, Ben asserted that his decision to smoke was not influenced by his smoker friends, despite their persistent offers. Instead, it was his curiosity that drove him to try a cigarette. After several attempts, he eventually developed an intense liking for it, describing the experience as an "addiction". While it may be true that curiosity played a role in Ben's initiation into smoking, it can also be attributed to his social interactions with his friends. Constantly being in their company and regularly exposed to smoke likely fueled his curiosity about why they enjoyed smoking and what made cigarettes appealing. This perspective is echoed in the response of Dionicio (pseudonym), who stated, *Kay gapanigarilyo man lagi sila [barkada], gakatingala sad ko unsay lami so ila ko'ng gitintal nga motesting so ako sang gitingingan. Unya pila ka mga higayon, akong na-realize nga lami man diay. So didto dayon nagsugod tanan* (Because they [friends] were smokers, I was always curious what it tasted like so they tempted me to try it so I tried it. After some time, I realized that it tasted good. So that is where it all started).

A Means to Manage Negative Feelings and Emotions

In their narratives, farmworkers revealed certain psychological aspects of smoking, emphasizing its mental and emotional therapeutic benefits. Many of them described using cigarettes as a means to cope with negative feelings and emotions such as anxiety, fatigue, anger, irritation, loneliness, boredom, and nervousness. The majority of their responses indicated that smoking occurred primarily during work hours.

For instance, Caloy (pseudonym) recounted an experience where he turned to smoking when faced with a stressful or shocking situation while working on the farm. This occurred when his sickle

[TRANSLATION]

When I was in high school, I became friends with smokers and alcohol drinkers like Juan (pseudonym), who now lives in the neighboring barangay (village). They offered me a cigarette by saying, 'You should try this because we are men and this is our way of life. Your father is also a smoker.' For every lunch break, after we ate our lunch, we would go to Neneng's (pseudonym) sari-sari store to drink and smoke. So, when the classes resumed at 1 PM, we already had enough.

[TRANSLATION]

When I was still a teenager, my friends introduced me to cigarette smoking. Several times, they tried to teach me how to do it, but I declined. I was not tempted until I tried it myself at home, without their presence, out of curiosity. Eventually, I got addicted to it. I always looked for it and then started to bond with my friends.

accidentally nicked his little finger while harvesting rice. Despite the perceived nerve-wracking situation, he found solace in smoking.

Kanang mag-harvest mo'g humay kay dapat paspas ka aron inyong grupo makauli og sayo unya di na dayon mo mainitan. Kay dali-dali lagi mi, naa toy time nga nasamad akong kumingking sa galab. Gikulbaan ko'g ayo ato kay grabe ang dugo. Gikulbaan ko'g samot katong giignan ko's akong kauban nga 'hala, nangluspad na ka, Caloy!' Layo ang health center sa among gigalaban ato. Gitabangan dayon ko's akong kauban, unya nangayo dayon ko'g sigarilyo aron makalma ko. Nikalma-kalma sad akong gibati samtang gayupypog og sigarilyo. Ila dayon ko'ng giignan nga muadto's health center aron malimpyohan ug madreingan akong samad. Katong giignan ko's midwife nga 'hala, kadako ba aning imong samad!' gikulbaan nasad ko, samot na tong iya nang gibu'tnga'g alcohol akong samad; grabe ka sakit. Katong nakauli na ko's balay, naa pa gyapoy sakit kanang murag gaugtok-ugtok bitaw. Mao tong nanigarilyo nasad ko aron malimtan nako nga naa koy samad. Sa akong hunahuna, ang sigarilyo gyod ang nakatabang ato aron makalma ko. (Caloy)

While most accounts primarily discussed psychosocial stresses originating from the work environment, some farmworkers also mentioned smoking during stressful situations caused by family conflicts and relationship problems.

Adtong hayskol pa ko, akong papa kay sugarol. Mao nang ang kwarta unta nga para magamit sa among panginahanglanon ug sa among pag-eskuyla, mahurot niya pirmi sa bulangan. Kabalo na ka aning daghan ta'g igsuon nga kailangan niya suportaan. Naglagot gyod ko niya ato, ug dali ra kaayo ko gasaputon tungod anang iyang sugal. Ato nga time, sige ko'g sigarilyo aron mawala akong kasuko sa iya. Usahay muadto ko's balay sa akong barkada, mosigarilyo, ug matulog dayon didto og mga pila ka adlaw. Gaapason gani ko's akong mama didto. Nakahaman ko'g hayskol nga ako-ako lang, pareha anang mang-labor. Pero wa na ko nakapadayan sa college kay tungod sa problema's kwarta. (Ben)

Ben acknowledged the significant role of his father, the family's breadwinner, in his and his siblings' aspirations in life. He expected his father to fulfill his responsibilities by providing financial support, which his father struggled to fulfill due to his gambling habit. This caused frustration and resentment for Ben, who turned to smoking and spending time with friends as a coping mechanism. Instead of confronting his father or speaking ill of him, Ben used smoking and staying away from home to manage his negative emotions. This behavior aligns with previous research indicating that individuals with a tendency toward anger may be more prone to seeking the calming effects of nicotine (Gehricke et al., 2013). While Ben recognized the temporary relief provided by smoking, Eduardo

[TRANSLATION]

Manual harvesting of rice requires that you should be fast so that your group can go home early and escape from the scorching heat of the sun. Since we are in a hurry, there was a time when my sickle accidentally slightly cut the nail of my little finger. I got so nervous because it was bleeding heavily. I got more nervous when one of my companions said, 'Oh my, you looked pale, Caloy!' The health center was too far away from our location. I was then assisted by one of my companions and asked him to give me cigarettes so that I could calm down. I got slightly calmed while puffing my cigarettes. They then told me to go to the health center and have the wound cleaned and dressed. When the midwife saw my wound, she told me, 'Oh, your wound is quite large!' So, I got nervous again, even more when she poured alcohol on my wound; it was really painful. When I got home, the pain was still there. It was like there was a beating sensation. So, I smoked again to calm myself and for me to forget that I had a wound. I think smoking was the one that really helped me calm down.

[TRANSLATION]

Back when I was still in high school, my father was a gambler. That is why the money that could have been used for our daily needs and my schooling was instead betted on cockfighting. You know, I have many siblings who he should support. I really hated him and got easily irritated because of his gambling. That time, I always smoked to relieve my hate for him. Sometimes, I went to my friend's house, smoked, and slept there for days. My mother even fetched me there. I graduated high school through self-support, like doing farm labor. But I did not pursue college because of financial problems.

turned to it because he felt unable to discuss his family problems with friends. In addition to his farm labor, Caloy also worked on a poultry farm, where he was tasked with maintaining and repairing the chicken coop or poultry house. The boredom he experienced in this role led him to smoke.

Naa toy mga higayon nga nakatrabaho ko's poultry-han, tig-maintain anang kulongan sa manok. Didto gapandayon namong salog nga kawayan samot na'g gkalata ug humok na na'ng kawayan. Giasayin man mi [kauban sa trabaho] kada sudlanan. Pananglitan lugar, ang isa ka tao iasayin sa una ug ikaduha nga kulongan, ug ang isa nasad sa ikatulo ug upat. Maong wa gyod koy lain maestorya-estoryahan kada tingpahulay na. Grabe gyod ka laay. Gitestingtan nako'g kawala akong kalaay pinaagi's pagtan-aw anang gapangitlog nga mga manok. Pero kadugayan nakong tan-aw ana, sumo man sad. Para mawala gyod siya, nikuot ko'g sigarilyo sa akong bolsa ug ako dayong gisindihan. Mao nang gadaladala gyod ko pirmi'g sigarilyo kay kung laayon ko, naa koy ma yupyop para mawala siya. (Caloy)

[TRANSLATION]

There were instances when I worked on a poultry farm as coop maintainer. I fixed the bamboo floor there, especially when the bamboo was rotten or fragile. We were individually assigned to each cage. For example, one person was assigned to cages 1 and 2 and another to cages 3 and 4. So, I did not have anyone to talk to because we were apart. I was really bored during breaks. I tried to vanish the boredom away by watching the hens laying eggs. But looking at them for a long time could be very boring. To completely get rid of it, I picked up cigarettes in my pocket and lit them. That is why I always bring cigarettes with me because whenever I am bored, I can have something to puff to brush it off.

Sweger (2021) wrote that in a study conducted by the Penn State College of Medicine, increased use of cigarettes is attributed to boredom. Consistent with this finding are those of Popova et al. (2021), who demonstrated that smokers engaged more frequently in smoking activity because of boredom, along with stress. Meanwhile, Felimon (pseudonym) imputed his loneliness to the absence of his smoker friends who were already married and had only little to no time for their gatherings. So, every time he smoked, he felt like he had a "barkada" (friend) with him.

Kauban gyod nako na ang pagpanigarilyo kay ako ra pirmi diri's uma. Kibale, ako siyang gitrato nga barkada ba. Sa una katong ulitawo pa ko, daghan kay ko'g mga barkada nga nagtudlo sa ako unsaon pagpanigarilyo. Grabe mi ka-enjoy sige'g uban sa una. Karon nga halusa sa ila kay minyo na man unya ako kay wa pa, usahay nalang mi gakita. Pirmi nako sila mahunahunaan kung manigarilyo ko. Paminaw nako naa sad koy kauban diri bisan pa'g ako ra usa. (Felimon)

[TRANSLATION]

Smoking is my companion because I am always alone here on the farm. I treat it like a friend. When I was a teenager, I had many friends who taught me how to smoke. We enjoyed each other's company. Now that most of them are married and I am still single, we seldom see each other. I can always think of them when I smoke here. I feel like I also have companions here, even if I am just alone.

A Thought Provoker and Organizer

Smoking aided farmworkers in organizing their thoughts and ideas, particularly when they found themselves in confusing situations at work or faced difficulties with their livelihood. Gibo shared, *Usahay kanang magplano-plano ka ba unya kanang mag trabaho. Makatabang na'ng sige ka'g suyop samtang gaplano. Linaw kaayong panghunahuna* (Sometimes when making plans and then while working. It can help when you make plans while puffing. It clears my mind). In this regard, they used smoking as a means to enhance their cognitive function.

Naa toy insidente nga galisod ko'g ayo sa makina's akong motor. Natangtang nako kalit ang isa ka piyesa unya galisod ko'g balik ba. Di gyod nako siya mabalik hangtod nga gakaalit nako. Gitawagan pa gani nako sa cellphone akong amigo nga mekaniko pero di nako siya gakacontact kay hinay kaayong signal. Mao tong nagpahulay ko kadiyot unya sindi dayon ko'g isa ka sigarilyo. Gasigarilyo ko samtang gatan-aw sa akong natangtang nga piyesa sa makina. Human nako'g panigarilyo, kalit ra dayon nako nadumduman kung giunsa nako sa una. Ingon ko nga, 'ay, oo, inanon raman diay to pagbalik ho.' Akong dayo'ng gitapok tanan ug gitaud balik. Sa akong hunahuna, murag nakatabang gyod sa ako ang sigarilyo ato nga time. Nakatabang siya nga makahunahuna ko'g tarong. (Dionicio)

Because of smoking, Dionicio had a eureka moment— he was able to hearken back to his experience facing and addressing the same problem. While he mentioned that smoking was able to clear his mind, it also implied that smoking improved his episodic memory, which refers to the 'conscious recollection of a personal experience that contains information on what has happened and also where and when it happened' (Pause et al., 2013, p. 1).

A Culture among Friends

Farmworkers frequently smoked with their smoker friends, as highlighted by Eduardo when asked about the situations when he would usually smoke: "*Kanang magkita ko's akong mga amigo nga mga chain-smokers. Mag-estorya mi parte sa trabaho, pamilya, ug among panginabuhian. Samtang gaestorya mi, gapanigarilyo sad mi*" (When I meet my friends who are also chain-smokers. We would talk about work, family, and livelihood. While we are talking, we are also smoking). This indicates that cigarettes were part of their social life, like food being inseparable from any social gathering. They needed to smoke to maintain social connections and, when necessary, share cigarettes to reinforce social networks. Anton illustrated that when smoking, *Mas samot gyod [kalingaw] og naa kay kauban nga makaestorya-estorya nga gapanigarilyo pod. Mao na dayon nang higayon nga grabe imong panigarilyo* ([It's] even more [enjoyable] when you have a companion to talk to who's also a smoker. That is the time that you smoked endlessly). While joyfulness was cited as a reason, one apparent motive was that they also wanted to follow and keep up with their friends' social norms in order to build and sustain social connections. This claim was evident in Ben's response after having been asked about which part of their social interactions or gatherings smoking usually comes into play. He answered:

Sa among tapok-tapok, boring kaayo akong paminaw kung di mi tanan manigarilyo. Kung naa koy makita nga barkada nga manigarilyo, mosunod nasad dayon ang usa unya tanan na dayon. Kanang makita nako sila nga lingaw kaayo nga gaestorya-estorya og bisan unsa pareha anang kung aha nasad magtapok, gakaenganyo sad ko manigarilyo. Dapat ko manigarilyo aron kanang makasabay bitaw sa ila. (Ben)

[TRANSLATION]

There was this incident wherein I had difficulty fixing my motorcycle's engine in our house. I accidentally dismantled one of its parts and had a hard time putting it back again. I could not fix it to the point that I got angry. I even called my friend over the phone but could not reach him because of a poor signal. So I took a rest for a while and lit one stick of cigarette. I was smoking and watching the dismantled pieces of the engine. After I finished smoking, I suddenly remembered how I had done it before. I said, 'Oh, yes, this is how I should do it.' I gathered all the pieces and assembled them again. I think during that time, smoking helped me with my problem. It helped me think well.

[TRANSLATION]

In our gatherings, I felt it is very boring if not all of us smoke. Whenever I see a friend light a cigarette, another friend follows, and everyone else. As I see them enjoying it while talking about things like where to bond next, I am also enticed to smoke. I have to smoke so that I can keep up with them.

As deduced from his response, Ben's peers exerted influence on his smoking behavior. Within their peer group, Ben perceived smoking as necessary for fostering and maintaining social connections,

essential for experiencing joy, and fostering a lively atmosphere during gatherings. Consequently, all group members could experience a sense of belonging or “pakikisama” (a Filipino trait meaning a willingness to go along with the group). Ben’s story also demonstrated how the observation of social norms and one’s mere presence in the group influenced smoking behavior, thus imposing social pressure on him to “keep up” with his friends as a means of staying involved in the group. Moreover, to reinforce their bonds, they shared cigarettes, especially when one could not afford a piece due to a tight budget. This reflected the farmworkers’ acknowledgment of their shared responsibility as members of their community— a concept known as “damayan,” another Filipino trait. This mutual accountability among group members was crucial for maintaining group dynamics, facilitated by sharing cigarettes.

An Integral Part of Life

When asked about their daily routines and the role of smoking, farmworkers emphasized that smoking was ubiquitous in their lives and intertwined with their day-to-day activities. They highlighted that they smoked immediately upon waking up, after or while drinking coffee, and after eating breakfast. Caloy described his morning routine, stating, *Kanang momata ko, gapangitaon siya sa akong lawas. Kanang murag, kung magmata ko, ang una nga mosulod sa akong hunahuna kay lamia manigarilyo oy. Kay kuan ba, adik, adik na gyod. Pirminte na gyod nako siya mahunahunaan* (The moment I wake up, my body always looks for it. It is like when I wake up, that is the first thing that comes into my mind, saying, ‘I like to smoke.’ Because of addiction. I am addicted already. I always think of it). Caloy’s reasoning reflected his intense craving for smoking, which he attributed to addiction, suggesting that the thought of smoking frequently crossed his mind.

Similarly, Felimon shared his routine, stating, *Sa dihang momata ko, magkuha ko anağ duha ka stick sa sigarilyo. Ayha ko magluto og pagkaon ug mamahaw, makahurot sad ko anağ duha ka sticks. Ako nang gihimo ang sigarilyo og kauban ug kalingawan diri’s uma* (When I wake up, I get two sticks of cigarettes. Before cooking food and eating my breakfast, I can consume another two sticks. I make cigarettes as my companion and pastime here on the farm). Notably, Felimon, being single, considered cigarettes as companions in his daily routine, particularly while working alone on the farm. Perhaps, for Felimon, smoking evoked nostalgic memories and provided companionship in moments of loneliness.

Gibo emphasized his habitual morning smoking, stating, *Gapanigarilyo ko kada buntag. Usahay, ayha mangape ug mokaon. Pirmi gyod ko gasigarilyo. Ambot lang. Murag naanad na ko. Tsada kaayo akong paminaw kung makapanigarilyo ko. Di gyod makompleto akong adlaw kung wala na* (I smoke every morning. Sometimes, before coffee and eating. I always smoke. I do not know. I got used to it. I feel so good every time I smoke. My day would not be complete without it). Gibo’s remarks indicated his dependency on smoking, similar to Caloy’s experience. This dependency might be attributed to nicotine addiction, as evidenced by his reliance on smoking to feel good and complete his day.

Eduardo also expressed his dependency on smoking, particularly after drinking coffee, stating, *Ganahan gyod ko manigarilyo kay paminaw nako murag gatulo akong laway kung di ko kasigarilyo* (I really like to smoke because I felt like I salivate if I cannot smoke). For Eduardo, salivation signified a craving for cigarettes, further illustrating his dependence on smoking to satisfy his cravings.

Gibo shared his attempt to quit smoking, revealing that he only managed to abstain for three days before relapsing because his mind constantly reminded him to smoke. He expressed concerns about the potential effects on his lungs if he were to quit entirely, stating, *Maapektohan akong бага kay basin ang nicotine nalang ang gapugong ani. Kay pirmi ko kapoyon kung way sigarilyo* (My lungs will be affected because maybe the nicotine is the only thing that holds it. Because I feel tired if there is no cigarette). Similarly, Felimon expressed that something would feel missing if he were to

stop smoking due to his dependence— his body had grown accustomed to it. The responses from the farmworkers provide further evidence of how smoking can lead to addiction, defined as a “strong, usually passionate liking for something” (Baumeister, 2017, p. 68). Consequently, the farmworkers found themselves in a situation where they felt they had lost their free will— smoking became their only means of satisfying their strong desire for cigarettes despite holding notions about the potential repercussions on their well-being.

While many farmworkers acknowledged the potential health hazards of smoking, Eduardo offered a contrasting perspective. He mentioned the absence of negative health effects from smoking on his parents, who did not warn him about the potential consequences of smoking when he was younger. Instead, they emphasized the benefits of smoking, such as its capacity to act as an insect repellent. As a result, Eduardo believed that smoking was not entirely harmful.

Sa karon, gapadayon pa gyapon koḡ sigarilyo kay naandan na man nako. Nakuha nako siya sa akong mga ginikanan. 83 years old na akong mga ginikanan unya wa pa gyod nako sila nakitan nga nagsakit tungod ana. Moingon man ganing uban nga makadaot daw sa atong lawas ang pagpanigarilyo, pero lahi man ang kaso sa akong ginikanan. So okay ra gyod manigarilyo. (Eduardo)

[TRANSLATION]

As of now, I continue smoking because I am used to it. I got it from my parents. My parents are already 83 years old, and I have not seen them getting sick because of cigarettes. Others would even say that smoking can be bad for our health, but my parents' case is different. So smoking is okay.

In this present work, the results showed that exposure to parents' smoking behavior at home had a major influence on how smoking was positively viewed by the farmworkers, leading to the modeling of smoking behavior. They thought that the smoking behavior of their parents, who have been cited in the literature as “role models” of healthy behaviors to their children (Coto et al., 2019), was acceptable. These results agreed with the findings of earlier reports. In a study by Wilkinson et al. (2008), it was found that parent smokers directly influenced smoking behavior, and their children reported positive attitudes toward smoking. Strunin et al. (2017) and Okoli et al. (2017) found that those family members who smoked promoted the initiation of smoking and, at the same time, influenced the earlier onset of smoking in adolescents. In a similar vein, the study of Johnston et al. (2012) demonstrated that Indigenous Australian youths considered their parents as “teachers” of smoking because of the latter's exposure to tobacco at home and smoking paraphernalia. The same case applies to American-Indian adolescents, who modeled their smoking behavior on their parents (Kegler et al., 2015). It was also highlighted by Baheiraei et al. (2014) that a family member who smokes was associated with lifetime cigarette use among Iranian male adolescents.

The findings agreed with Johnston et al. (2012), who explained that at a young age, there was an increase in the influence of friends and social networks on smoking initiation and behavior among young people since they imposed social pressure on their peers to smoke in order to fit in or be accepted in the group. Johnston et al. (2012) continued that this was the time when smoking experimentation frequently happened.

In this study, the role of cigarettes was also viewed as farmworkers' emotional outlet wherein farmworkers could vent their stress— just like a friend, whom they could share their problems with and subsequently ease their burdened heart. In the extant literature, family conflicts are associated with smoking behavior among adults and even adolescents (Buhelt et al., 2021; Lawless et al., 2015; Šabić & Mujanović, 2020).

The accounts of the farmworkers about smoking as a thought provoker and organizer may be attributed to the cognitive-enhancing effects of nicotine, as forwarded by Alhowail (2021) and Valentine & Sofuoglu (2018). Farmworkers expressed that smoking can bolster their memory, which aligns with the results of the study of Jubelt et al. (2008), who found that nicotine can enhance rapid and accurate episodic memory. Nicotine's benefits on brain performance have also been proven by Heishman et al. (2010), who discovered significant positive effects on six domains: fine motor, alerting attention accuracy, orienting attention, short-term episodic memory accuracy, and working memory. These explicate the farmworkers' experiences where smoking benefited their thought process.

The result of the present study extended what was found in other existing pieces of literature, highlighting smoking as a vehicle for socialization to strengthen and make group bonds. Mohammadnezhad and Kengganpanich (2021) uncovered that for adult smokers in Fiji, smoking had the capacity to establish a friendship. One of the informants of Onen and Watson (2021) highlighted that smoking can form a bond among smokers. Miething et al. (2016) asserted that smokers usually socialize with other smokers, and they tend to deselect non-smokers from their networks. According to Kueh et al. (2021), social bond (attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief) was strongly associated with smoking behavior.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, five themes on the meanings of smoking surfaced inductively: (1) a parent and peer influence, (2) a means to manage negative feelings and emotions, (3) a thought-provoker and organizer, (4) a culture among friends, and (5) an integral part of life. Given the meanings, it can be concluded that it would be difficult for farmworkers to stop their smoking habit. The meanings that farmworkers gave reproduced tenets in a farming community. Their meanings of smoking defined how they reproduced the social order they created. Through these meanings, they have come to live in peace and harmony.

Farmworkers' tenets while living in a farming community created their own culture that only they could understand and live on. It can be surmised that, perhaps, the parents need to be educated rather than the children. The older generation should set the example in cognizance of their roles as models worth emulating, as young people's perceived norms are influenced by the verbal and non-verbal (smoking gestures) messages they receive from adults. Also, smoking is farmworkers' cultural norm, wherein pro-smoking attitudes and atmosphere are promoted, thereby driving them to continue smoking. In other words, smoking characterizes what they should do without regard for the eventual noxious effect of smoking on health. Smoking dictates their etiquette and the meaning of normal and acceptable behavior in given contexts. As members of their smoking community, they are expected to perform the prescribed norms.

Moreover, smoking is their main way to bounce back from the lowest and most challenging point of their lives. They find refuge in smoking, which enables them to temporarily escape from reality to survive. Therefore, facing everyday struggles as breadwinners of the family would be even harder if they stopped smoking.

To forestall the ballooning scourge of smoking, developing or strengthening anti-smoking campaigns in the Philippines is recommended for public health professionals, the local government unit, the Department of Health (DOH), and development communication professionals. These include counseling among the farmworkers, conducting community health seminars, and producing information education campaign materials like a comic, which has been found to be successful in increasing awareness and knowledge acquisition resulting in the promotion of people's beliefs, attitudes, and behavior change (Jee & Anggoro, 2012), and audiovisual materials, which are effective

in educating low-educated adolescents about smoking that induced negative attitudes toward smoking (de Graaf et al., 2016), and increased motivation to quit smoking (Ismail et al., 2021). Additionally, there is a need for the local and national government to revisit the enforcement of relevant laws and ordinances as their implementation is only centered on the populations in the urban area. Reaching the rural areas can be done by closely coordinating with the barangay, purok officials, and the barangay health centers.

Conflict of Interest Statement

We have no conflict of interest to disclose.

AI Disclosure

We declare that this manuscript was prepared without the assistance of artificial intelligence. Hence, the content of this paper is original.

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