

**Social Entrepreneurship Orientation in Iloilo and Ilocos Norte,
Philippines: An Empirical Study**

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Abstract

The study investigates the significant difference in social entrepreneurship orientation in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo. The study participants were the business owners and managers residing in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo, and they were selected using a non-probability quota sampling technique. The study employed a quantitative research design and a comparative research approach to measure the significant difference in the two provinces' social entrepreneurship orientation. Using a t-test for independent samples, the findings revealed no significant difference in social entrepreneurship orientation in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo. Inferences and future research directions were also provided in the study.

Keywords: *social entrepreneurship, social passion*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has driven much of the progress of the business sector and the rapid expansion of the social sector. Entrepreneurship is a cradle of economic transformation because it creates employment, drives growth, and promotes innovation. Similarly, entrepreneurship nurtures social integration by uniting citizens, enriching culture, and ultimately becoming part of the social and economic flow. The term entrepreneurship has repeatedly been used to solve social problems. Schumpeter (2010) stated that entrepreneurship was a crucial process through which the economy advanced. The sector of business studies includes a discipline known as social entrepreneurship, which is the focus of this study. Gorgievski and Stephan (2016) described social entrepreneurship as a driver of economic and social well-being and productivity, concluding that entrepreneurship can generate value through job creation, environmental sustainability, innovation, and staff happiness. Organizations must have significantly high levels of sustainability to obtain an advantage over their competitors. The outcomes of the contingent factors of proactiveness and risk-taking orientation have been studied to learn how companies can innovate. Innovativeness is a dominant element in

entrepreneurial orientation, as proactiveness and risk-taking. However, social entrepreneurship asks another factor, which reflects the detailed characteristics of such companies. This factor is a social entrepreneurial orientation. The essence of social entrepreneurship is a social entrepreneurial orientation. Social entrepreneurial orientation refers to the mixture of entrepreneurial orientation and reciprocity. Reciprocity involves taking what society has received and returning it in sustainable practices that benefit the community. Innovation is a common element of entrepreneurial orientation, social entrepreneurial orientation, and operational performance. Therefore, a managerial direction conducive to nurturing innovation is essential. The leadership style that best advances exploration and exploitation and, consequently, design.

They are creating a business with a considerable impact giving people that were formerly unemployed—a chance to be a component of our society and build their own lives. Social enterprises are very unlike commercial enterprises, or charities, or public servants. They form a prospering budding sector, a sector that has continued to grow. Some of them are very ambitious; they want to transform the system. System modification is not just about scale. System change is about changing the hearts and minds of people, and the exciting thing is that sharing is a fundamental principle of all social entrepreneurs because they want to allocate their models and create impact. To the social entrepreneur, it's about finding as many enterprises. As they scale that impact, they can inspire others to become a social entrepreneur to spread it as a virus. The exciting thing about social entrepreneurs is frustrated by what they see in their immediate environment. They want to make a change, where success will be measured by the social impact they create. Every social entrepreneur has a theory of evolution. They want to change something in this world. They want to create a market-based solution, which also means the solution is sustainable. The most ambitious one wants systemic change; they want that change to be much more significant than their enterprise.

Ilocos Norte and Iloilo provinces are located in different parts of the Philippines. Ilocos Norte is found in the northernmost part of the country, while Iloilo is in the Visayas. Though the two provinces are situated in different regions, the status of social entrepreneurship is the same. The concept is still new to the two areas, and that they are still minimal social entrepreneurs based on initial observation. Thus, these two provinces are suitable case studies for social entrepreneurship orientation because the researchers would like to determine the status of social entrepreneurship orientations and why there is still minimal social entrepreneurship in the area.

*Research Framework and Hypothesis**Entrepreneurial Orientation*

The idea of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has become central to the domain of entrepreneurship (Covin et al., 2013). As Hughes et al. (2015:119), cited by (Sascha Kraus et al.), suggest, an "EO can be defined as the core of the decision-making mindset, attitudes and procedures underpinning the firm's strategy building practice, competitive posture, and management philosophy and thus condenses the entrepreneurial inclinations of the firm." Correspondingly, an EO is recognized as a critical competence of entrepreneurial firms, as it is regarded as a requirement of such firms' ability to identify and exploit opportunities that create value (Bouncken et al., 2016) saw SE as an "*entrepreneurial* endeavor, with the primary objective of creating *social* (instead of commercial) value."

The growing focus on private-sector-driven development has also witnessed the emergence of a wide range of business model hybrids in recent years, which in one way or another seek to add the effectiveness and innovativeness of a commercial enterprise with the provision of developmental goods such as jobs, welfare, opportunities, and education. One such hybrid is a social enterprise through which people commit efforts to address community challenges to reduce inefficiencies in communities and societies towards development (Omoredede, 2014). Moreover, the increasing convergence between the for-profit and not-for-profit spheres has brought together the two relationships between social interests and market efficiency. As a result, social entrepreneurship has recently attracted attention in most parts of the world (Urban, 2008; Jiao, 2011; Omoredede, 2014; Sserwanga et al., 2014), cited by Abaho, E. et al.

Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship seems to be more relevant in developing countries where social needs are persistently underserved and employment opportunities are often scarce. Omoredede (2014) argues that an individual's intentional mindset contributes to the making of the decision to start a social enterprise because it drives the passion for a cause that is facilitated by the support provided in their social network to force the spirit of persistence in the frequently challenging situation of being a social entrepreneur. An individual mindset is compelled by the perception of social enterprise desirability and feasibility (Jiao, 2011) since it is from this that people commit to developing their social enterprises. Therefore, while some people start and fail in the social enterprise sector, others grow and expand mainly due to entrepreneurial orientation differences. Schillo (2011) presents an entrepreneurial orientation of business as ability and willingness for risk-taking,

proactiveness, innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy. Dess and Lumpkin (2005), Stam and Elfring (2008) seem to agree and further argue that entrepreneurial orientation as a mode of strategy making is vital in exploiting new business ideas. Wiklund and Shepherd (2003) state that entrepreneurial orientation gives a firm strategic direction, especially in spotting and taking up various business opportunities and influencing internal resource allocation, determining internal and external growth.

According to the theory of social innovation (Schumpeter, 1934), cited by Abaho E. et al. (2017), a social entrepreneur is a social innovator who reforms and revolutionizes producing social value and shifts resources into areas of high yield for the society. The concept of social entrepreneurship has been recognized the world over to impact lives (Moingeon et al., 2009).

Although aid organizations and policy-makers have made concerted efforts to encourage the growth of social enterprises as capacity building strategies for assisting impoverished communities (Sserwanga et al., 2014), only a small portion of the population has continued to appreciate the concept of social entrepreneurship (Kirby & Nagwa, 2011). On the other hand, Chandra (2016) argues that social entrepreneurship is distinct from business entrepreneurs, yet the two concepts operate on similar entrepreneurship principles regarding resources, constraints, and opportunities. Smith, Bell, and Watts (2014), in their study on the difference between the personality trait of social and traditional entrepreneurs, found that social entrepreneurs exhibit statistically and significantly higher levels of creativity, risk-taking, and need for autonomy than conventional entrepreneurs.

Although Smith et al. (2014) argue that social entrepreneurs rank high in entrepreneurial orientation, their sample size and attribution were the main limitations because it was reasonably culturally homogeneous and small, limiting the findings' generalization. More study is needed to fathom the role of entrepreneurial orientation among social entrepreneurs and how this impacts their performance.

The distinction of a social enterprise from other commercial enterprises

Fowler (2000) argues that social entrepreneurship should distinguish itself from commercial entrepreneurship as its primary aim is to generate social value without necessarily relying on access to a tax-derived subsidy. Fowler suggests that these organizations aim to create a surplus rather than a profit to tackle a social problem. Fowler's distinction of a social enterprise from other commercial enterprises is closer to what constitutes a social enterprise. The operational definition of a social enterprise in

this study follows Dees and Anderson's (2006) perspective of combining social objectives and orientation of NGOs in an enterprise following market-driven business practices.

Entrepreneurial Orientation Research on the notion of entrepreneurial orientation is on the upswing as scholars recognize that firms adopting entrepreneurially-oriented behaviors often outperform their less entrepreneurially-oriented counterparts (Wiklund, 1999; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Ngoma, Abaho, Nangoli & Kusemererwa, 2017). The conceptualization of entrepreneurial orientation is dynamic and has changed over time (Landstrom 2009). Some scholars refer to it as an individual opportunistic activity that creates value and bears the kind of risk strongly associated with innovation (Sexton & Kasarda, 1992). Others refer to it as a firm-level construct related to organizational performance (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Madsen, 2007). Covin et al. (1992) refer to entrepreneurial orientation as a strategic construct whose conceptual domain includes specific firm-level outcomes and management-related preferences, beliefs, and behaviors evident in or expressed by a firm's top-level managers. Furthermore, entrepreneurial orientation constitutes the decision-making styles, recurrent processes based on learning generated capabilities (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Winter, 2003), and methods that inform a firm's entrepreneurial activities (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Runyan et al. (2008) argue that entrepreneurial orientation is manifested in attitudes towards innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking. These entrepreneurship dimensions are central to entrepreneurial orientation (Miller, 1983; Miller, 2011; Covin and Slevin, 1989). Thus in the social entrepreneurship context, entrepreneurial orientation facilitates opportunity recognition among individuals sensitive to changes in the business environment (Sserwanga et al., 2014).

Innovativeness and growth of social enterprises

According to Detre et al. (2011), innovativeness is observable if all social enterprise areas create new ideas and build on them to produce output that is more appealing to the public to make better output. Moreover, these ideas can be imported from outside the social enterprise and introduced into the work systems for that same social enterprise. However, Mazzarol (2002) affirms that innovation must be born from within the social enterprise and can never at one time be purchased from external sources. Although innovativeness has many dimensions, the most common ones are radical-versus-incremental, product-versus-process, and administrative-versus-technological (Zhao, Li & Liu, 2006).

Incremental innovation is routine with cumulative series whereby minor changes result (West & Farr, 1990). On the other hand, radical innovation causes significant

abrupt changes or something markedly different from what a social enterprise had done before. Thus, the degree of newness (radical/incremental) involves changes in other aspects of social business (Otero-Neira et al., 2009). Innovation also occurs when the social enterprise modifies the productive process significantly in the operational year.

According to Vivarelli (2013), policies aimed at more significant growth and productivity of a social enterprise may have to consider the different mechanisms resulting in innovations from technological and cost-competitiveness strategies and different relevancies in industry groups. Furthermore, innovativeness reflects a tendency to engage in and support new social ideas, novelty, experimentation, and creative processes that may result in further social products, social services, or social, technological processes (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). For sustainability, social enterprises should invest in in-depth beneficiary knowledge (Christensen & Bower, 1996).

However, when beneficiaries are impoverished, their needs and preferences often go unrecognized, limiting the social entrepreneurs innovative abilities (London et al., 2010; Viswanathan et al., 2005, 2010; Weidner et al., 2010; Luu, 2017). From the developmental social entrepreneurship perspective, social enterprises seeking to innovate to the poor in developing countries need to open up the exchange relationship with their beneficiaries to co-create value with end-users on their terms (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Social innovations face steep barriers, particularly in impoverished rural communities where the average individual is likely to deviate from the norm by which the rest of the community abides (Viswanathan, 2007). Hence, innovations introduced to those living in poverty in developing countries must connect with the individual beneficiaries and their local communities (Khavul et al., 2009).

Proactiveness and growth of social enterprises

Proactive social entrepreneurs are more extroverted, open, and conscientious (Bolton & Lane, 2012). Proactiveness is vital in influencing social enterprise start-ups because it enhances the probability of undertaking the requisite tasks likely to lead to new social enterprises (Kropp et al., 2008; Kraus, 2013). Social enterprises are likely to expand and grow when there is a high level of entrepreneurial proactiveness. In this case, a firm that can anticipate future problems, needs, and changes, takes pertinent and strategic initiatives, anticipates, and creates new opportunities. Initiates/participate in emerging markets, a competitive advantage essential in steering social enterprise growth (Eggers et al., 2013).

Proactive intentions enable social entrepreneurs to develop new competitive ideas and creative innovations. This continuous anticipation creates dynamism within a social enterprise, which is essential for competing in emerging social enterprise markets

(Sandberg, 2007). When a social enterprise is proactive, it anticipates future needs and takes dynamic initiatives to energize the beneficiaries' needs, which is essential for growth (Fontela et al., 2006).

Proactiveness also helps in seizing opportunities through searching, monitoring, anticipating, and exploiting current and future needs (Vora et al., 2012; Santos et al., 2012).

Therefore, proactiveness influences the growth of social enterprises by anticipating future needs and taking dynamic strategic initiatives. In this study, proactiveness refers to planning, controlling, and opportunity-seeking activities by social enterprises (Santos et al., 2012).

Hypotheses Development

Hypothesis 1. Social entrepreneurship orientation is not significantly different in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo.

H1.1 Social passion is not significantly different in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo.

H1.2 Innovativeness is not significantly different in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo.

H1.3 Risk-taking is not significantly different in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo.

H1.4 proactivenessProactiveness is not significantly different in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo.

According to the findings of the study of Jamali D. et al. (2018), it was noted that social enterprises in the Middle East and South Africa region rely basically on individual kindness and ingenuity of social entrepreneurs who serve as carters and architects of positive change in a complex environment. However, social entrepreneurs are contributors to economic development. They are being controlled by some factors around them, including the scarce availability of funds, the limited technological advancements, and the absence of visible support from other entrepreneurs, social incubators, and investors interested in social and environmental expansion. The lack of government initiative and support and the outdated legislation that continues to treat social enterprises as outmoded for-profit corporations were also identified as essential constraints. The study's findings clarify that the lack of awareness about social entrepreneurship in the MENA region is again proving to be a hindrance, particularly concerning the attraction and retention of talent in this sector.

From the study of Yangui N. and Jarbouise A. (2013), the results further reveal that personal motivation directly affects the cause of social entrepreneurs in Tunisia. The impact of personal motivation is confirmed among Tunisian social entrepreneurs. This is aligned with the results of Atkinson (1957) and Rauch and Frese (2007), which

emphasizes the importance of personal motivation for entrepreneurs, and with Lumpkin et al. (2011). They noted that the latter's determinants influence social enterprises—these motivations as processes that lead and support individual action. According to Klarner et al. (2013), they determine specific behaviors such as the need for achievement, risk-taking, the need for power, a sense of competence.

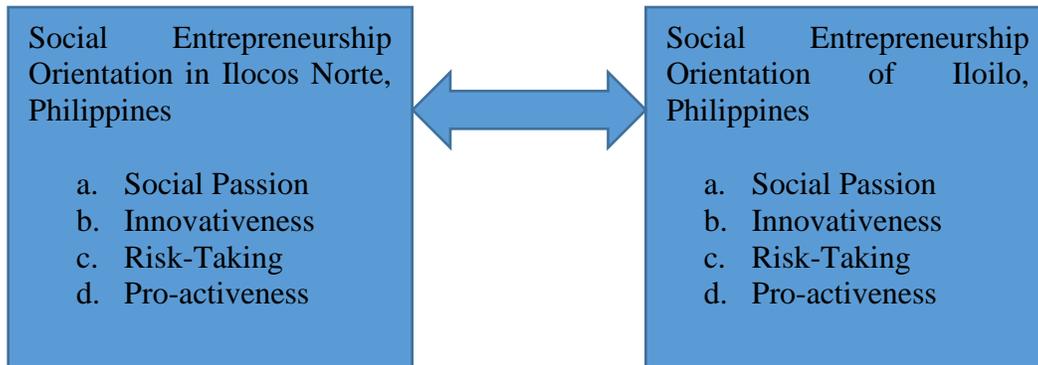


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

This study research paradigm explains the study's primary objective: to compare and contrast the two provinces' social entrepreneurship orientation, Iloilo and Ilocos Norte, in terms of social passion, innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness.

Methodology

Participants of the Study

The study respondents were selected through non-probability quota sampling, and they were the business owners or managers of businesses in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo Province. Since this research is collaborative and the two provinces are far from each other, the team was divided into two. One team surveyed 150 business owners or managers in Ilocos Norte and the other in Iloilo Province. Out of 300 survey questionnaires floated, 300 were answered thoroughly and correctly by the respondents, a 100% response rate. The distribution of these questionnaires was done in August 2019, and the responses to instruments were recovered last April 2020.

Table 1.*Demographic Profile*

	Level	Count	Total	Proportion
Age	Below 27 y.o.	122	300	0.407
	27-37 y.o.	100	300	0.333
	38-48 y.o.	35	300	0.117
	49-59 y.o.	41	300	0.137
	60 years old above	2	300	0.007
Sex	Female	139	300	0.463
	Male	161	300	0.537
Status	Single	174	300	0.580
	Married	113	300	0.377
	Widow	13	300	0.043
Education	Elementary Graduate	63	300	0.210
	Highschool Graduate	108	300	0.360
	College Graduate	123	300	0.410
	Post-Graduate	6	300	0.020
Income	Below 15000	147	300	0.490
	15,001-30,000	76	300	0.253
	30,001-60,000	25	300	0.083
	60,001-90,000	45	300	0.143
	Above 90,000	9	300	0.030

Table 1 revealed that 122 respondents (40.7%) are aged 27 years and below, and 100 respondents (33.3%) are aged 28-38. Also, according to sex, 53.7% are male, and 46.3% are female. According to table 1, most respondents are single (174 respondents or 58%) and are college graduates (123 respondents or 41%). Lastly, according to monthly income, most of them have an income range of below 15,000 pesos (147 respondents or 49%).

Research Instrument

For this research, a questionnaire was utilized to gather data from the sample. It comprises two (2) parts, the demographic profile and the four social entrepreneurship orientation constructs. The demographic profile consisted of age, sex, civil status, education, location, and average monthly income. On the other hand, social entrepreneurship orientation was measured using the questionnaire of Satar and Saqib (2019), which was composed of 13 questions, divided into social passion (3), innovativeness (3), risk-taking (4), and proactiveness (3). All four constructs were

measured using a four-point scale where one means Never and four as always. The reliability of the said constructs was measured, as shown in Table 2.

Data Analysis

A quantitative research design was used in this study. Moreover, a comparative research approach was used to measure the significant difference in the two provinces' social entrepreneurship orientations. The T-test for two independent samples was employed to estimate the difference between the two means. An independent *t*-test can also be used to compare two distinct populations of already different people in some way (Cumming, 2012). The researchers used SPSS to analyzed the data gathered.

Results

Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of the instrument is critical in research data collection. Reliability, a measure to indicate that a reliable tool is used in gathering data, is useful. Good agents will not be tendentious, directing the respondents to select specific answers. The reliability test instrument can be done by using Cronbach's Alpha. The device is said to have a high degree of reliability if the value of Cronbach's Alpha obtained is .70-.90 (SPSStest, 2019).

Table 2.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.808	13

Based on Table 2, the results are a Cronbach Alpha = .808, which indicates that the questionnaire used was reliable. It can be concluded from tables 2 and 3 that the instrument utilized was valid and reliable.

Significant Difference in Social Entrepreneurship Orientation

This paper aims is to know if there is a significant difference in social entrepreneurship orientation in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo Province. But first, let us see the means of the four constructs for the business owners and managers of the two provinces:

Table 3.*Descriptive Statistics*

	Location	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Social Passion	Iloilo	150	3.09	.59005	.04818
	Ilocos Norte	150	3.12	.56978	.04652
Innovativeness	Iloilo	150	3.18	1.00076	.08171
	Ilocos Norte	150	3.07	.59585	.04865
Risk-Taking	Iloilo	150	2.99	.51603	.04213
	Ilocos Norte	150	2.99	.65943	.05384
Proactiveness	Iloilo	150	3.17	.59595	.04866
	Ilocos Norte	150	3.25	.58787	.04800

Table 3 revealed the mean ratings of the two groups of respondents of their social entrepreneurship orientation. The highest mean is proactiveness ($x=3.25$) for business owners/managers in Ilocos Norte and Innovativeness ($x=3.18$) for business owners/managers in Iloilo Province. However, looking closely at the table, both managers and owners of the two provinces have the lowest mean rating of 2.99 for the risk-taking construct.

Table 4.

Independent Samples Test

			Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence				
			F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std Error Diff	Lower	Upper
Social Entrep Orientation	Equal variances assumed		3.716	.055	.051	298	.959	.00293	.05717	-.10958	.11545
	Equal variances not assumed				.051	283.383	.959	.00293	.05717	-.10961	.11547

It can be deduced from Table 4 that sig. (2-tailed) is more generous than .05, which means no significant difference between the social entrepreneurship in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo Province. Going in-depth on social entrepreneurship orientation, the four constructs were also analyzed.

Table 4.1

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			Mean Diff	Std Error Diff	95% Confidence interval	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)			Lower	Upper
Social Passion	Equal variances assumed	.040	.841	-.433	298	.665	-.02900	.06697	-.16080	.10280
	Equal variances not assumed			-.433	297.636	.665	-.02900	.06697	-.16080	.10280
Innovation	Equal variances assumed	1.979	.161	1.097	298	.273	.10433	.09510	-.08282	.29148
	Equal variances not assumed			1.097	242.848	.274	.10433	.09510	-.08299	.29166
Risk-Taking	Equal variances assumed	10.885	.001	.049	298	.961	.00333	.06837	-.13121	.13788
	Equal variances not assumed			.049	281.718	.961	.00333	.06837	-.13124	.13791
Proactiveness	Equal variances assumed	.917	.339	-1.041	298	.299	-.07113	.06835	-.20564	.06338
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.041	297.945	.299	-.07113	.06835	-.20564	.06338

Based on table 4.1, all four constructs (social passion, innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness) have a sig. (2 tailed) more remarkable than .05, which means no significant difference between the constructs in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo Province.

Discussions

This study's findings revealed no significant difference in social entrepreneurship orientation in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo Province. Looking at the four constructs, it is further confirmed that there is no significant difference in Ilocos Norte and Iloilo, along with the four constructs of social entrepreneurship orientation. This means that business owners and managers in the two provinces have the same exposures and capabilities as social entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurship orientation gauges the possibility of engaging in social enterprises and measures the four directions that an entrepreneur is likely to venture into social enterprise (Regy et al., 2017). The study revealed that business owners/managers in the two provinces could engage in social enterprises as reflected in the means of their social entrepreneurship orientations. However, there are no existing social enterprises in their areas. Social enterprises are not okay known business models in the Philippines, and the model should be made aware of the country. There are limited social enterprises such as Gawad Kalinga, but their presence is concentrated only in metro cities, such as Metro Manila. Social enterprises are essential because the main goal is to help alleviate people's lives (Jamali, 2018). Social enterprises may not give high economic prosperity, but their importance in the economy is crucial. Thus, it should be concentrated in big cities, but the business model should be introduced to the provinces like Ilocos Norte and Iloilo. There are several ways on how to let people know about the business model. First, the government should help entrepreneurs shift from being just an entrepreneur to become social entrepreneurs. They can give tax incentives and funding to help promote advocacy. Second, schools and universities can include social entrepreneurship in their curriculum for business students to be aware of the concept. Lastly, the schools can educate the locals about social entrepreneurship to gain popularity about the idea.

The data of the study suggested that there is an inclination towards social entrepreneurship. Thus, all sectors of society should help one another to introduce the concept of social entrepreneurship.

Management Implication and Future Research Directions

This empirical study on the Social Entrepreneurship Orientation in Iloilo and Ilocos Norte, Philippines: an Empirical Research is expected to provide additional knowledge to business to uncover the most significant contribution of social entrepreneurship to our society and our economy. This will enlighten people that their talents will be utilized in place, and at the same time, they can create value and innovations that may help every consumer and business partner. May this research serve

as inspiration to our entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs to continue to soar for the better. With our colossal society problem, especially poverty that is very dominant in our country, we need social entrepreneurs to help uplift our spirits for a better living. Since this is a thinly researched area, especially in a developing country, including the Philippines, the findings from this study are predicted to be very useful for management practitioners and academicians.

The following are the managerial implications of this study:

- From a theoretical point of view, the research will be guided on the result of the comparative research on the social entrepreneurship between Ilocos Norte and Iloilo City by using the variables indicated in the conceptual framework that will provide a comprehensive theory to researchers and academicians to explore factors that are of significance in the orientation of social entrepreneurship.
- The study will contribute by developing a reliable and valid scale in comparing both provinces, thus offering researchers and practitioners a research instrument that can be used for future studies.

The study highlights the comparison of Ilocos Norte and Iloilo city on their orientation of social entrepreneurship using Social Passion, Innovativeness, Risk-Taking, Pro-activeness, and this comparative result study will help researchers to determine which province is more aware and practicing social entrepreneurship. This study will give a guide to researchers to know better practices in introducing social entrepreneurship.

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**Understanding the Cultural Value of *Hiya*, Interaction with Foreigners,
and English Language Learning in the Philippines**
Istiarti B. Sarempaa & Safary Wa-Mbaleka

Abstract

The Philippines is a country with rich cultural and linguistic diversity. A cultural heritage mixed with several cultures makes the Philippines a great place of blended culture. The Filipino people hold on to their strong cultural concept of family and peace. Hiya or shame, shyness, or propriety takes a big contribution to their everyday interaction and contributes to their harmonious living. It is one of the signature traits that make them unique. This paper is a mini-ethnography study undertaken to study hiya as lived and believed in the Filipino culture. The purpose of the study was to explore hiya in Filipino's interaction in a daily context, its effect on English communication, and in a classroom setting. This study revealed that hiya is a social conduct controller or propriety that rules the interaction of the Filipino people. Keeping face and putting other people's feelings above oneself are the main themes of hiya. However, it has some negative effects on classroom performance that sometimes leads to a lack of involvement in-class activities. This study concludes that hiya is not a negative trait but a virtue that needs to be viewed from the right perspective. Hiya is not a personal feeling but a culture of Filipino that makes them unique.

Keywords: *The Philippines, Filipino, ethnography, Hiya, English, culture.*

Introduction

The Philippines is an archipelago country with distinctive cultural backgrounds and languages. The latest count of the Philippine islands by National Geographic (2020) is about 7,640 islands, with 2,000 of them being currently inhabited. This diverse set of cultures happens as a result of the exposure of the country to different influences from other countries, predominantly by Spain, the United States of America (USA), and Japan (Nadeau, 2020). These countries brought their cultural influence together when they colonized the Philippines. The heritage of each country contributed to the current cultural diversity in the country. Not only was the contribution cultural; it also influenced the language, education, and governmental sides. Moreover, considering other factors, diversity also comes from inside the Philippines itself. Their custom, belief systems, speech acts, languages, and dialects also make this country rich in cultural heritage.

The Philippines is also linguistically rich. While Filipino, which is mainly made of Tagalog, is officially considered as the national and unifying language in the country, English has taken a front stage around the Philippines when communicating in everyday life's transactions or activities (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). The Filipino cultural and linguistic diversity affects their way of learning English. In this country, English is regarded as a lingua franca in which people use it as a medium of communication. English is also the official language and the medium of instruction in higher education. Nevertheless, the unique Filipino culture takes account of the way the Filipino people speak and use English. While this first language culture transfer to English can make communication quite clear among Filipinos, it may lead to misunderstanding or miscommunication when Filipino people communicate with non-Filipino speakers.

The foreign influences do not fully eliminate the true Filipino identity. Filipino people still hold on to their cultural values such as *hiya* (shyness), *dangal* (honor or reputation), *pamantayan* (norms), and so on (Bueno, 2013). These traditions in the Filipino culture impact the way they communicate and relate to each other. By observing the way they interact with each other and also how they interact with foreigners, they seem like shy people. It turns out that they have a unique culture that they call *hiya* or "shyness," "shame," or "propriety."

As foreigners involved in applied linguistics education in the Philippines, we decided to explore the Filipino culture from the *hiya* perspective. This study aimed at exploring how the concept of *hiya* in Filipino culture affects their way of learning English and their speech acts in English. We also wanted to discover the emergent of *hiya* through the way the Filipinos use the language when they communicate. Their body language, gestures, eye contact when they interact were also the subject of this study of *hiya* when communicating in English. Through this study, we hoped to present some practical lessons that can be useful for both Filipino people and foreigners when communicating in English. Such a mutual understanding of the cultural difference could certainly improve communication between Filipinos and foreigners and probably have a positive contribution to English language teaching and learning in the Philippines.

Review of the Literature

Like many other countries, Filipinos hold on to their indigenous tradition and culture such as respect, family, *hiya* or shame, keeping face, conflict avoidance, peace, and the list goes on (Cultural Atlas, 2020). These are the conduct norms that emphasize the distinctiveness of the Filipino culture that makes Filipino people different and highly driven by their cultural values and interpersonal relationship that influence their way of speaking, communicating, and preventing conflict. Although, through their cultural

lenses, some foreigners may see this as a true harmony while others may see it as just a façade, the truth is that Filipino people are driven by this *hiya*. It is the one that explains their shyness or feeling of shame when interacting in public.

Hiya is one of the Filipino cultural values translated as “shame” or “shyness.” It is interpreted in many ways. In fact, *hiya* is more than shame. Some people connect *hiya* to a feeling of embarrassment when committing a mistake in the presence of other people. According to Santos (2003), *hiya* is viewed as “social control” that regulates how people interact with others. Therefore, this cultural value is a communication control device.

Moreover, *hiya* is viewed as a feeling of appropriateness to act in the community in front of significant or prominent individuals. Lasquety-Reyes (2016) proposed two categories of *hiya* which are *hiya* as a deteriorated feeling of disgrace and *hiya* as willpower to put others ahead and not to hurt or offend other people. *Hiya* is not the personality of a singular person but, it is their cultural value.

This Filipino cultural concept of *hiya* is seen both positively and negatively. On the positive side, *hiya* raises the feeling of respect in society. It also helps to keep the emotional state of people around under control (Santos, 2003). Moreover, the shame feeling of *hiya* can also be a driving factor to perform and behave well. Not wanting to be ashamed and embarrassed, Filipino people tend to do their best to not lose face in front of others (Jocano, 1993).

In contrast, *hiya* is seen as low esteem or “inferiority complex” (Santos, 2003). It relates to low self-worth and a bad perception of self. Thus, *hiya* might be a hindrance for a Filipino to communicate or interact with others. *Hiya* depends on how people understand this concept. Therefore, in interacting with or among the Filipino people, the interlocutor needs to decide what role *hiya* plays in the conversation.

The *Hiya* concept incorporates many other elements of culture and practice. The feeling of shame or appropriateness guides people’s way of talking, acting, and doing their work. Lynch (1996) describes how *hiya* takes part in everyday activity. He explained that Filipinos use a neutral term or understatement when they talk to avoid hurting the feeling of others and not losing their face. It is used to calm the situation or to decrease the feeling of resentment. Besides, *hiya* also takes part in opening a discussion. They use the ‘feeler’ expression to check whether they are in a good mood to talk. They would not continue the conversation or request something when they feel the person does not respond in a happy or friendly intonation. Last, Lynch added that Filipino often use the third party to be the middle man. In such a situation, *hiya* prevents them from feeling

ashamed. This approach also works as a preventive measure for a potential conflict or argument.

Additionally, even though Filipino people are affectionate and interested in relations with others, *hiya* is still strong. Summarizing the description of *hiya* in Santos (2003), this vigorous belief of *hiya* has been misrepresented in two ways—deficiency in shame and an extreme feeling of shame. People who easily hurt other people's feelings and do not care about them are viewed as shameless or thick-face people. Such people are viewed negatively in the Filipino culture. Also, feeling too ashamed is not the right trait of *hiya*. It usually happens due to the delicate feeling of criticism. Being indifferent to the feeling of others is not the culture. *Hiya* expected to be positive; that is, an asset of communication in the Filipino culture.

In second language acquisition (SLA), the feeling of shame or anxiety is considered a negative emotion that inhibits the process of learning (Suliman, 2014). *Hiya* in the SLA theory is somehow related to Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis. The feeling of shame of losing face can raise anxiety in the second language (L2) learning and performance in an English classroom setting. When Filipino learners worry too much about losing face in front of someone in power, such as a teacher in an English class, those learners may feel worried and make sure that they do not make any mistake. This can lead them to avoid being involved in different class activities. Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) came across the fact that "communication apprehension and ... fear of being in public, shyness, and inaccuracy when speaking" (p. 8) are the sources of anxiety. In this case, *hiya* is viewed in a negative way that can lead to pragmatic failure and also malfunction in learning. This fear can raise the affective filter that prevents L2 learners from trying to speak English. Repetitive avoidance of English speaking practice will eventually affect the production of their L2.

Anxiety is considered a detrimental factor in English language learning. Sadiq (2017) affirms that anxiety is a negative feeling which is disadvantageous in speaking skills, and an anxious feeling is related to low self-esteem, which results in low academic achievement. Discussing anxiety, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) proposed three types of anxiety which are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The negative impact these three can have on L2 learning is obvious. Lucas, Mirafloros, and Go (2011) added that "the language classroom naturally presents itself as an anxiety-causing situation to some language learners, as it involves constant and periodic evaluation of the learners' performance and competence" (p. 95). One can only imagine the added fear that *hiya* can bring to L2 learning. These factors are all related to L2 teaching, learning, classroom setting.

Since *hiya* is directly related to keeping face, Filipinos can be ambiguous with their “yes.” Sometimes the answer “yes” for something that means “no,” or their gesture contradicts what comes out of the mouth. Foreigners who do not know the *hiya* culture may think that it is an act of untruthfulness, and they might be offended by this kind of encounter (Lynch, 1996; Santos, 2003). This can lead to a communication breakdown between the two parties or pragmatic failure (Wa-Mbaleka, Blath, Lloren, & Duan, 2014). *Hiya* in the Filipino culture needs a deeper study to get more people’s understanding and acceptance.

Nevertheless, literature that discusses *hiya* and L2 teaching and learning still deficient. The sources are still limited. More research on this topic is highly needed. Since the number of people coming to study in the Philippines is rising, there is an important need for cultural awareness of Filipinos, especially in this matter *hiya*.

The purpose of this study was to explore *hiya* as a cultural value in Filipino interaction with others and its relationship with English transmission of information, English language teaching and learning. This includes discovering Filipino speech acts that display *hiya* in their interaction and how it affects their communication in English. Thus, this mini-ethnographic study sought to find how *hiya* affects the way Filipino learn and perform in the English classroom.

To accomplish the purpose of the study, three research questions were developed as the main focus of the exploration:

1. How does the cultural value of *hiya* affect current Filipino’s interaction?
2. How does *hiya* affect the usage of English and the way Filipino communicate in English?
3. How does *hiya* contribute to the learning and performance in the English classroom setting?

Methodology

Since the focus of this study is on exploring the culture in the real context of Filipino people, this study should have used the ethnographic research approach. This is because ethnography is a study of the culture of a particular group of people to gain an understanding of the context of culture (Joyner, Rouse, & Glatthorn, 2013). However, this study used a mini-ethnographic study in an online setting. The online YouTube videos were used because this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic period when community lockdown was commonly imposed and practiced. In this methodology section, we discuss how the study was carried out.

Research Design

This study is a mini-ethnography. A mini-ethnographic study is an exploration of cultural values, beliefs, and practices that is conducted in a short time without the extensive exploration that is required in a full-blown ethnographic study (Fetterman, 2010). This design was considered fit for this study because we were exploring just one cultural value; we were not interested in studying one complete culture of the Filipino people. Qualitative research methods were used to explore the Filipino's cultural concept of *hiya*. The complexity of the research subject made it hard to use the quantitative approach. Qualitative research is believed better suited for complex topics than quantitative research (Lichtman, 2013). Quantitative research cannot help uncover the cultural subtleties that needed to be explored in this study. Qualitative research emphasizes personal lived experiences in the real setting. It helps explore and develop a deep understanding of a particular culture or meaning.

Research Setting

This mini-ethnography research explored and examined the Filipino culture, especially *hiya*, in daily life communication. Due to the pandemic issue in the Philippines, the participants of the study and the setting were based on the video documentaries on YouTube. The setting of this study focused on the population of the Philippines generally, as represented in the videos.

This study spotted the general life of urban, rural, and education settings varying in age and gender. Most of the people in the videos were from middle to low-income society, as spotted in the video. People use code-switching between Tagalog and English at diverse literacy levels. They had different kinds of occupations from office workers, teachers, health workers, and sellers, while others were unemployed.

Filipino people value family and peace. In one house, some families can live together with their relatives from two or three different generations. Also, some low-income families can live in small houses with more than five members. There is certainly a need for peaceful living within the family and, by extension, in a shared community. Catholicism is the dominant religion in the Philippines. The historically big church buildings and universities are found in many places in the country. Some historical buildings from the Spanish legacy are still standing in many parts of the Philippines. These buildings are part of the historical heritage and cultural values of the Philippines, which are diverse and family-oriented people.

In the Philippines, the public transportation system is generally made of buses, jeepneys, and tricycles. Many of these means of public transportation have limited space; thus, calling again for peaceful sharing of resources. The barangay is the smallest unit in the government system, which is ruled by a barangay captain. It is clear that the Philippine government intentionally instituted the barangay to reinforce the sense of community and peaceful cohabitation in small communities, which is intrinsically part of the Filipino culture. Last, every public place has security guards equipped with guns. This practice of guards carrying guns while on duty is intriguing because, by default, Filipino people are culturally expected to be peaceful people; yet, the presence of guns seems to mean that peace must be required by force. This is a topic that should be explored in the future.

Data Collection

This study required the involvement of the researchers in the setting. In this case, we are not natives of the Philippines but have stayed in the country for a combined duration of 11 years. We have encountered and interacted with Filipino people regularly and in many different parts of the Philippines. This study used videos of documentaries from YouTube as a method to collect data due to the impossibility of interacting with people during the COVID-19 pandemic time.

The videos that were used in this study were randomly selected from YouTube. The main criteria were that the video had to portray the real-life setting of the Filipino people and how they interact, socialize, and go about their everyday life. So, the live vlog of both Filipinos and tourists who came to spend time in the Philippines was selected to be sources of the data collection. These vlogs are videos where people shared their life experiences being in the Philippines and how they interacted with local people. The length of the videos varies from 20 to 30 minutes each. Usually, vlogs are narrated, and provide demographic features and the reality that is happening in the real setting of the life of Filipino people in general. Five YouTube vlogs were selected for this study.

In selecting the videos, we used specific keywords. We were specifically looking for the videos that mentioned life in the Philippines and how Filipino live and interact with each other. Also, the length of the video mattered. During the video, the process of observation took place. We took notes of important details, such as general information about the life of Filipinos. The demographic information was also recorded from the videos. We also took note of how the Filipino people interacted with the person who recorded the video and with people around. Their gestures, facial expressions, way of speaking, and how they communicated were carefully observed and taken note of. Most of the videos that were used either had the English subtitle, or the vlogger spoke English.

So when the participants use code-switching, the English version of it was provided in the caption or subtitle in the video.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data of this study was based on thematic analysis. Analysis was based on the research questions and how the different themes related to the research questions came together to explain the concept of *hiya*. All the other themes unrelated to the research problem and the research questions were not included in the analysis.

Researchers' Reflexivity

We are both foreigners in the Philippines. One of us lived in the Philippines for eight years as an applied linguistics professor at a private international higher education institution. That is where we both met when the other one was starting a master's degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages. The other one has been living in the Philippines for three years and is currently a doctoral student in the Philippines after completing her master's in the Philippines. Culture is a complex issue, and we cannot claim to be experts on the Filipino culture. However, we undertook this study to learn of this issue of *hiya* because we had individually experienced it both positively and negatively. We thought that studying it systematically could be the best way to understand *hiya* well and share this knowledge with the world.

Findings

This section presents the findings of the three research questions in this study. The three main topics of this study are *hiya* in Filipino interactions, the effect of *hiya* on English communication, and *hiya* in learning and performance in the English classroom. Below are the main themes observed in the selected YouTube videos.

Hiya in Filipino Interactions

Filipino people have an extensive concern about keeping and losing face. In day-by-day interactions, *hiya* is shown in several contexts of communications. First, Filipinos feel *hiya* when they meet new people. It is not easy for them to start a conversation or to involve in a conversation when they are new or unfamiliar with the people around them. *Hiya* is also related to the presence of influential people. Filipino usually do not express their opinion or feelings in front of authorities. This is due to feeling afraid of criticism, making mistakes or looking clumsy in front of others. Also, they are anxious about not meeting the expectations of the authorities. In line with this, Del Villar (2010) found that

feeling afraid of being rejected or denied a favor, self-confidence, and expectation from society are contributing factors to Filipino's shyness in oral communication. *Hiya* becomes a behavior rule in society.

Second, *hiya* happens during the request and agreement situation. Filipinos find it hard to say "no" in many requests. They tend to say "yes" when they do not mean it. It is shown on several occasions of interaction with other people. Filipinos cannot resist when others ask for help or request to do something. Even though they do not like or cannot do what is requested, they will say "yes." They can do anything to avoid saying "no," especially to people who are higher in position or have a big influence. The reason is that they do not want to offend or hurt other's feelings. Wa-Mbaleka et al., (2014) found this phenomenon in their study too. They stated that the gestures contradicted the oral utterances of the people that they observed in the province of Cavite, Philippines. In that study, people verbally said "yes" while their facial expressions said "no." They tend to have sacrificial self-control for the sake of other people. Santos (2003) commented that this cultural trait is used as a "cultural shield intended to fortify ourselves from being embarrassed or shamed through public exposure" (p. 27). Keeping face takes place in this kind of interaction.

The Effect of Hiya in English Communication

Based on the observation in the videos in daily life experience, *hiya* happens in both languages used in code-switching, that is, Tagalog and English. Filipinos feel *hiya* in meeting new people, whether they are foreigners or other local people. However, those with low English proficiency showed more *hiya* when they tried to speak in English and suddenly switched to the local language. Some cover their mouth after speaking English. Afraid of making mistakes and being criticized for their English is perhaps one contributing factor that raises the feeling of *hiya*.

In some areas, English is not used as much as in the city. The level of education and the kind of school that Filipino people attend to contribute to their English speaking ability (Wa-Mbaleka, et al., 2014). So, the level of English-speaking fluency also affects the feeling of *hiya* among the Filipino people. Since they are conscious about losing face, making mistakes in English speaking contributes to *hiya*.

Hiya in English Learning Performance

Relating to the feeling of *hiya* in daily interaction, it also happens in the classroom setting. The feeling of *hiya* is even higher in the English classroom setting due to the presence of the authority, that is, the teacher. *Hiya* happens in some class activities that involve participation and speaking in front of the class. Filipino students may decide not to speak English as an L2 class simply because of *hiya*. A foreign teacher of English in the Philippines may misunderstand this seeming lack of learners' involvement in-class activities with low motivation or even low academic performance. On the other hand, international students being taught by a Filipino teacher may be misinterpreted from the *hiya* perspective as being impolite if these students are outspoken or very active in their L2 learning.

In the classroom setting, students feel *hiya* when they are asked to present in front of the class. The presence of a teacher that is regarded as an authority raises the feeling of *hiya*. Meeting the expectation of the teacher adds tension because Filipino learners are expected to do well for them not to lose face and for them to keep their dignity. Here, *hiya* is somehow connected to low self-confidence. Navita (2016) believes that students with low self-confidence have difficulty expressing themselves and choose not to be involved in classroom activities. They choose not to engage with activities that require them to talk.

Additionally, *hiya* occurs when they are asked to give their opinion in class. Even though they have something in their mind, Filipino students may not state it because of *hiya*. Also, when they are asked to do something that they are not good at or do not master, they can easily refuse to participate. Shyness makes students delay answering the questions due to the fear of negative evaluation from the teachers and other classmates (Namaghi, 2015). *Hiya* in this type is related to classroom anxiety related to the affective filter hypothesis from Krashen (1982). When the level of anxiety arises, class performance decreases.

However, *hiya* in Filipino culture is not fully a negative attribute. *Hiya* acts as a social conduct control for them to behave according to the expectation of society. In general, at least in the Filipino culture, this helps keep harmony and peace in the group or the community. Without it, people can supposedly be "rude" or get in a "conflict". *Hiya* guides Filipinos on how to behave in front of authorities or influential people. It guides them to show politeness and courtesy to other people.

Conclusion

The Filipino cultural attribute *hiya*, when translated, means shame, shyness, or propriety. It has a significant contribution to the interactions of Filipino people. *Hiya* is a social norm on how to behave according with the cultural values of Filipino society in general. It is viewed from two perspectives: negative and positive. Keeping face and not hurting other people's feelings are types of *hiya* that can be a good or bad influence on classroom performance. In the sense of not harming other people's emotional state, *hiya* is a good trait. However, Filipino people should learn to be open with their "no" answers. Yes, must mean yes, and no must mean no to avoid misunderstandings, especially when Filipinos are interacting with foreigners. Also, Filipino students in an L2 context should be led to understand that a more active role in learning is helpful for their academic performance. They should not feel shy to make mistakes when they are learning English as an L2.

Hiya is a virtue in the Filipino culture. However, it needs to be viewed from the right perspective. Understanding this culture helps prevent pragmatic failure and communication breakdowns, especially when Filipino people interact with foreigners. Learning other people's culture raises the awareness of cultural diversity and help different people appreciate the way culture helps them express their feeling.

Reflecting on *hiya* as the culture of Filipino, English as an L2 teacher must find and implement strategies to cope with this cultural norm in their classrooms and their teaching. Creating a safe and positive environment in class for all L2 learners should be one of the major responsibilities of L2 teachers (Clapper, 2010). Being in a positive and encouraging classroom can help students be more expressive and manage their feeling of *hiya*. Teachers need to consider giving some reinforcement or reward to motivate students to participate and overcome their feeling of *hiya*.

Filipino people worry much about losing face when they make mistakes in class. Therefore, critics and confrontations are not the right way to correct the mistakes of Filipino learners. Nassaji and Fotos (2011) provide several strategies for giving feedback such as recast, clarification requests, repetition, and metalinguistic feedback. English as an L2 teacher also needs to minimize activities that require individual presentations. They can use role-play or simulations to help their Filipino students express themselves in a large group (Amaya, 2008; Namaghi, 2015). Additionally, cooperative learning is a great teaching strategy to help students cope with *hiya*. They can share more freely and more safely within smaller than larger groups.

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