

The Correlation of Humor Styles with Psychological Well Being and Collective Action among Filipino University Students

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Abstract: This study investigated the correlation of four humor styles with psychological well being and collective action among 539 Filipino university students. This study utilized a survey that included the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003), Psychological Well Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) and a collective action questionnaire adapted from the work of Zaal et al. (2011). Results revealed that benevolent humor styles, i.e., affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles are positively correlated with psychological well being dimensions while malevolent humor styles (aggressive and self-defeating humor styles) are negatively associated with indicators of psychological health. Benevolent humor style, particularly, affiliative humor appears to be inversely correlated with hostile forms of collective action while malevolent humor style (aggressive and self-defeating) is positively associated with direct and hostile forms of collective behaviors. These statistically significant correlations, albeit weak, offer support to the relationship of humor with psychological well being as well as with collective action. These results redound to the imminent paradox of humor's nature.

Key words: benevolent humor styles, malevolent humor styles, psychological well being, benevolent collective action, hostile collective action

Introduction

Humor is entrenched in the many facets of human lives such as in the area of personal well being, human attraction, interpersonal relations, conflict resolution, social influence, group identity and intergroup relations. Being embedded in human lives tells us that there is more to humor than meets the eye. Martin (2006) maintains that humor is indeed inherently ambiguous. In the context of group relations, humor can create harmony and solidify social identity and in-group favoritism. Humor can also fuel discord, cause conflict and reinforce negative stereotypes and discrimination. The history of peoples across the globe demonstrates how humor has been used as a weapon of the oppressed and as a social corrective in times of political turmoil and

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revolt as manifested in the existence of protest humor. This is poetically stated by George Orwell in the statement that: “Each joke is a tiny revolution.” (Orwell, 1945 in Hart, 2007, p. 20). With humor being so ingrained in the human psyche, a study that aims to empirically measure the different aspects of humor and its psychological and social correlates is relevant.

The objectives of the present project are to validate the relationship of humor styles (i.e., affiliative and aggressive humor style) with psychological well being and extend the work through the inclusion of the link between humor styles and collective action (i.e., benevolent and hostile collective action) among Filipino university students.

With respect to these objectives, the predictions are the following:

- a. That benevolent humor style will be associated with positive well being.
- b. That malevolent humor style will be linked with negative well being.
- c. That benevolent humor style will be associated with benevolent collective action.
- d. That malevolent humor style will be linked with hostile collective action.

Humor Styles and Well Being

Before discussing how humor contributes to the overall well being of an individual, an overview of the different styles of humor is in order. There are four established humor styles namely self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor, aggressive humor, and self-defeating humor (Martin et.al., 2003). The self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles are considered as positive or “good” humor for these involve the use of humor particularly during stressful events in order to lessen the negativity of the situation, and to amuse others and allow interpersonal interaction while reducing social awkwardness and stress. On the other hand, the other two humor styles—aggressive and self-defeating humor—are considered as maladaptive or “bad” humor. In the aggressive humor style, the individual utilizes a manipulative, often sarcastic humor which ridicules and insults others whilst in the self-defeating humor style, the individual tells jokes and insults directed at himself to amuse other people even at one’s own expense (Martin et al., 2003 as cited in Dyck & Holtzman, 2013, p. 53). These humor styles are described in detail below:

Affiliative humor is an adaptive interpersonal form of humor that involves the ability to use humor to put others at ease, amuse others and to improve relationships... aggressive humor is a maladaptive interpersonal form of humor involving sarcasm, teasing, ridicule,

derision, hostility or disparagement humor... Self-enhancing humor is an adaptive intrapersonal dimension of humor that involves a generally humorous outlook on life, a tendency to be frequently amused by the incongruities of life, and to maintain a humorous perspective even in the face of stress or adversity...Self-defeating humor, a self-directed type of humor, that involves excessively self-disparaging humor, attempts to amuse others by doing or saying funny things at one's expense as a means of ingratiating oneself or gaining approval. (Martin et.al., 2003 in Hampes, 2006, pp. 180–181)

People may experience similar challenges but no single individual copes with and overcome a problem in the same exact manner. When faced with a difficult situation, we human beings tend to just choose between fight, flight, or freeze. However, according to some researches, we now have a fourth option—which is to laugh (Kaur, Singh, & Mahalingam, 2013; Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003).

The prevalent idea in most studies pertains to the capability of humor to mitigate misery and stress caused by the difficulties and disappointments we experience in our daily life. Being unable to overcome these challenges may drastically affect our well being both physically and psychologically. Fortunately, as numerous researchers argued, having a sense of humor may perpetuate and enhance an individual's psychological well being amidst constant stress and struggles. According to Al Porterfield (1987, p. 306), it was noted that individuals who have encountered numerous negative incidents in their life are the ones who are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and develop poor physical health. This is compared to those people who seldom experience unfavorable life events, which seem to be rare nowadays.

In order to fully understand this link, we first need to define the indicators of psychological well being. Carol Ryff (1989, p. 1071) presents psychological well being as composed of various dimensions namely having self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, autonomy, personal growth, and having positive relations with other people. Furthermore, most researches link well being to life satisfaction. That is, an individual can achieve the maximum degree of well being if that individual is satisfied with the different aspects of his/her life such as those aforementioned dimensions of well being.

Based on several studies, it is evident that there is a connection between sense of humor and psychological well being. Scholars argued that anyone can achieve life satisfaction easier,

particularly if they are under stress, through the use of humor. In the study that looked into humor therapy and psychological well being, the authors explained that “humor offers the benefits of reducing stress hormones by reducing anxiety, improving circulation, producing a general sense of well being and boosting immune function” (Kaur, Singh, & Mahalingam, 2013, p. 53). In general, these are the primary benefits one could gain if they have a high sense of humor. Humor lessens the stress caused by an unfavorable event. It can be deduced that humor, compared to other things, is an effective coping mechanism. This is one of the ways humor can contribute to one’s psychological well being. But there are more specific ways in which humor can serve as a catalyst for well being.

Intra-psychological processes and humor

In Hampes’ work, findings revealed that a significant negative correlation exists between shyness and affiliative humor while a significant positive association was shown to exist between shyness and self-defeating humor. (Hampes, 2006, pp. 182–183). Frewen` and company investigated the relationship between humor styles and personality dimensions (sociotropy and autonomy) that are linked with depression. Using Beck’s framework, sociotropy is “the extent to which one’s sense of self-worth is based excessively on one’s perceived likableness to others” (Frewen, et.al., 2008, p. 179). On the other hand, autonomy is a personality trait that pertains to “the degree to which one is invested in preserving independence and defining self-worth in terms of personal achievement” (Frewen, et.al.,2008, p. 180). The results of the study showed the following correlations:

Sociotropy was associated with a self-defeating humor style whereas Need for Control (an autonomy dimension) was related to the use of an aggressive humor style. Increased use of self-defeating humor style and decreased use of self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles, were associated with increased depressive symptoms. (Frewen, et.al., 2008, p. 179)

Kuiper and McHale investigated the relations between self-evaluative standards and psychological well being and how humor style mediates this relationship. This study surfaced the following mediating effects of specific humor styles:

greater endorsement of positive self-evaluative standards led to the use of more affiliative humor, which, in turn, led to higher levels of social self esteem and lower levels of depression...greater endorsement of negative self-evaluative standards led to the use of more self-defeating humor, which resulted in lower levels of social self-esteem and higher levels of depression... greater endorsement of negative self-evaluative standards led to the use of less affiliative humor, which led to a decrease in social self-esteem. (Kuiper and McHale, 2009, p. 359)

The studies cited demonstrate how benevolent humor style is associated with positive well being while malevolent humor style is associated with negative well being.

According to Kuiper, Martin, and Olinger's study, an individual with better sense of humor can reappraise and cope with distressing situations more effectively than an individual with poor sense of humor. This is traced from the ability of the individual to perceive the situation as less threatening as well as having higher levels of positive affect (as cited in Cann & Collette, 2014, p. 465) before and/or during the distressing event.

The research of Charanjeet Kaur, Anuja Singh, & Mahalingam (2013) studied the effect of humor therapy on the psychological well being of student nurses in India. For one week, the researchers implemented a 30-minute laughing therapy on thirty-one (31) nursing students. The participants took the Positive and Negative Scale before and after the therapy. After their last session, the results revealed that there was an increase in the positive affect from 6.32 to 6.77 and a significant decrease in the negative affect from -4.74 to -6.29 of the nursing students. According to the same researchers, although the effects are effective only to some extent, laughing "improves positive mood and overall attitude, reduces stress/tension and negative feelings, promotes relaxation, improves sleep, enhances quality of life, strengthens social bonds and relationships, and produces a general sense of well being to individuals (p. 55)." Based on their research, it is evident that laughing is an effective method not only to help an individual adapt and confront a difficult situation but also to maintain and enhance his/her overall psychological well being.

Aside from humor as an effective coping mechanism, it can also develop and improve one's self-esteem, which actually helps increase one's level of happiness, perceived success, and

self-worth (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003 as cited in Zhao, Wang, & Kong, 2014, p. 127), therefore, promoting life satisfaction and a better sense of well being. Martin et al. (2003) explained in one of his studies that individuals who utilize self-enhancing humor seem to have higher levels of self-esteem compared to those who utilize maladaptive humor styles (as cited in Zhao, Wang, & Kong, 2014, p. 127).

On a similar note, based on the study of Martin (1996), it was evident that there is a relationship between optimism and well being. It means to say that the more optimistic a person is, the higher his level of psychological well being is. And optimism is said to be a dominant characteristic of people with the adaptive humor styles. On the other hand, the maladaptive humor styles were associated more to aggression and hostility than with well being (as cited in Ruch & Heintz, 2013, p. 2).

Because adaptive humor styles tend to promote positive mind conditions and feelings such as optimism, self-esteem and self-worth, and positive outlook in life, it is very likely that people engaging in these humor styles are more satisfied with their lives and are better psychologically.

In the research of Willibald Ruch and Sojan Heintz (2013), they found out that aside from optimism and self-esteem, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness were manifested by individuals with the self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles. While the opposite along with depression were manifested by those with the aggressive and self-defeating humor styles.

It is evident that positive moods, emotions, and attitudes, along with life satisfaction, are associated more with the adaptive humor styles. It is because the nature of both styles is actually for the improvement not only of the situation but also of the persons involved.

On a different note, in relation to the next section, it can be understood that humor could be a strong motivating factor that could propel people to engage not only in friendly or intimate relations, but also on the macro-level, that is, human relations in social groups such as protest groups.

Social Protest and Collective Action

People nowadays are becoming more assertive of their human and freedom rights. Since the emergence of mass media, especially the internet, individuals have become more knowledgeable,

determined, and committed to achieve societal changes and development. These resulted to them forming groups which encourage collective actions as a way to accomplish a shared goal. These groups are generally known as protest groups.

Literatures reveal that the terms “protests” or “social movements” seem to cover a number of dimensions. Some scholars argued that a protest is a behavior (Opp, 2009, p. 33), however, it is difficult to define which behaviors are and are not to be considered a protest. For instance, Opp (2009) emphasized that “it is not a protest if a single citizen writes a harsh letter to a politician demanding withdrawal of a decision. But if a group of individuals sign the letter this counts as an act of protest (p. 34).”

According to Karl-Dieter Opp (2009, p. 34) in his book *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements*, protests and social movements are common behaviors or joint actions, that is, if only a single person challenges another person or a group then it is not considered a protest. Therefore, protests are the activities a group of individuals plans and performs together towards a common purpose. Also, such collective actions should be voluntary and out of an individual’s own free-will (Meinzen-Dick, Di Gregorio, and McCarthy, 2004, p. 5).

Similarly, Tarrow (1994, p. 4) stated that “social movements are ‘collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities’” (as cited in Klandermans, 1997, p. 2). The author stated that the interaction should not only be among the people of the protest group but should also be for or against the authorities which include government officials, law enforcers, and other members of elite groups.

Other scholars defined protest as a ‘disruptive collective action’ as it requires large amounts of energy, time, money, and some even sacrifice their lives and careers for the sake of the movement’s success (Klandermans 1997, p. 2). Protests may cause destruction of private and public properties, and harm members of both parties but these acts are, most of the time, for the benefit of the many.

Protests are commonly a result of people’s yearning for political, social, or cultural changes in the society. These desires for changes are what drives people to join and participate in such movements as a form of objection to their targets’ decisions or policies, to bring about justice and human rights, to prevent war against terrorists or other countries, etc. (Opp, 2009, p. 34). Hence, these movements emerge when there is a need for a political or social change, or desire to prevent the authorities from making undesirable faulty decisions as perceived by the

masses. In general, protests and social movements as ‘collective actions’ are defined by the shared interest among the members of these protest groups (Oliver, 1993, p. 272).

In the work of Zaal, et al. (2011), they found it crucial to distinguish types of collective action, that of benevolent and hostile types of collective action. Much of the work done on collective action has dwelled on “benevolent responses to to group-based disadvantage, such as signing petitions, participating in peaceful demonstrations and aligning oneself with legitimate political movements” (Zaal, et al., 2011, p. 671). The other type of collective action has focused on antagonistic and joint efforts “aimed at harming the interests of those held responsible for the group’s disadvantage” (Zaal, et al., 2011, p. 671). In their study, examples of these hostile forms of collective action include engagement in “illegal wild strikes”, occupation of buildings”, “throwing up barricades” and “defacing buildings” (Zaal, et al., 2011, p. 689).

Humor and Collective Action

When we hear on the news that citizens of a particular country are currently engaging in protests, we immediately perceive these protests as serious, dangerous, and/or violent. Protests are actually a way of expressing disapproval and oppositions to particular conditions, laws, individuals or organizations; thus, it can absolutely turn from being a peaceful talk into an extremely serious and intense strike. However, some researchers argued that there is a more peaceful way people can do protests—through the use of jokes, sarcasm, satires and mockery which people perceive as humorous (Lee & Kwak, 2014; Goldman, 2013; Hart, 2007; Brandes, 1977).

In actuality, humor is hard to define for it is subjective. What’s humorous to an individual may not be humorous to others. But to give some light on the concept, some scholars agreed that humor relates to any word or action which people perceive as amusing and funny, and often makes them burst into laughter; humor also pertains to the mental process which helps people create, perceive, and enjoy such stimulus (Romanos, 2013, p. 3).

Similarly, in the research entitled *The Psychology of Humor: Basic Research and Translation*, the authors added that “humor is inherently ironic. It is obvious and instantly recognizable” (Berlyne, 1972 as cited in Ford et al., 2016, p. 1). It means that what makes jokes humorous is its intrinsic nature of irony. Jokes are more than its literal meaning; humor carries underlying messages, which are context-based, that are usually the opposite of its actual physical

content. People, especially those who participate in social movements, seem to enjoy this kind of humor. And as a result, protesters realized that they can use it to their advantage against the elites.

Humor can be used not only as a weapon in protests but also as a motivation of individuals to participate in collective actions. According to Nancy Goldman (2013), “comedy awakens us to these automatic, uncritical thought patterns in a way that we don’t find threatening” (Goldman, 2013, p. 3). Based on several researches, it is apparent that the use of humor can indirectly reveal what’s happening in the socio-political landscape through its underlying messages (Lee & Kwak, 2014; Hart, 2007; Brandes, 1977). Once people understand these messages, they are able to wake up from the fantasy that the elites have been feeding them and apprehend the problems and injustices that they have been trying to cover from the masses all this time. The good thing about comedy is that they show us the truth subtly, that way people can feel informed and alarmed instead of arousing fear and helplessness.

According to Stanley Brandes:

Humor must contain one ingredient whose presence is indispensable: an impulse, however faint, of aggression or apprehension. The mixture of rage and fear, hostility and self-defense, which is essential in all humor, is nowhere more apparent than in the field of politics. Especially when people live under politically repressive circumstances, they are likely to vent their anger and frustration through narrative jokes, riddle jokes, or related genres, and thereby create for themselves a temporary escape from omnipresent and severe restriction (Brandes, 1977, p. 331)

In the aforementioned statement of Brandes, it explained that aside from it being ironic, humor always carry in it an impulse which is a mixture of different negative emotions. Since people who belong in the minorities and oppressed do not have means to voice out their opinions, humor now becomes an alternative for them to express their disappointments, contentions, and frustrations without taking sole responsibility and blame for it.

Hoon Lee and Nojin Kwak (2014) asserted in their study that comments that convey objection and innuendoes about politics and public figures commonly bring about negative emotions such as anger, hatred, and hostility towards politics which actually is effective in

prompting people into participating in political activism. Tapping an individual's emotions actually impacts his attitudes as well as his behavior towards a particular stimulus. Hence, in this scenario, if people are exposed to satirical humor about politics, specifically if repeated exposure, it is likely that the negative mood of the humor will be instilled in the person. And this study found out that this now becomes people's drive to join in collective actions that give leverage to political humor.

Having discussed the element which stirs people to get involved in social protests, it is also important to understand what makes them stay and remain committed to the group. According to Martineau (1972), that factor is the connection between the members of an ingroup and the interaction between diverse groups. The use of humor may on one hand, solidify in-group identity of a people but at the same time create division between them and an outgroup. The Social Functions of Humor Model espoused by Martineau can shed light in understanding the role that humor plays in the context of diverse groups. The social function of humor in group dynamics can be understood by looking at three factors--who initiates, who is the recipient/audience and who is the subject matter of the humorous communication (Martineau, 1972, 115). The function of humor may vary relative to the combination of these factors. For instance, humor initiated in an intragroup that esteems the in-group can solidify the group but humor initiated within the group that disparages the in-group may function to introduce conflict and disintegration. In another case, humor initiated in an intergroup that esteems one of the groups may function towards social integration while a humor that disparages one of the groups may work towards disintegration (Martineau, 1972, pp. 116—123).

Groups that utilize humor as a form of protest normally deliver jokes not only towards the opposition group but also with themselves. These jokes are still generally used to ridicule public figures, but as they constantly exchange political humor, it develops certain codes that only the members of the group would be able to relate to (Romanos, 2013). Meyer (2000) also stated that the most important function of humor is that it is able to build group cohesiveness (as cited in Romanos, 2013, p. 10). As a result, this activity strengthens the collective identity of the group which is essential in keeping the members satisfied, confident, and committed to their collective goal.

Political humor or revolutionary humor, as some researchers call it, refers to humor that is directed towards leaders especially that of the government "in order to effectuate or resist

legal, constitutional, or political reforms” (Varol, 2014, p. 561). In the article entitled *Revolutionary Humor* written by Ozan Varol (2014), he stated that revolutionary humor may come in different forms such as photos, cartoons, videos, signage, jokes, even tweets and Facebook posts. Revolutionary humor is usually considered as ‘dark comedy’ for it could be a “sharp-tongued, hard-hitting satire” (Varol, 2014, p. 563).

Furthermore, researchers added that “the tone of political humor is predominantly aggressive and unflattering towards politics” for it emphasizes and ridicules public figures’ mistakes, decisions, attitudes, behaviors, or the public figure in general (Moy & Pfau, 2000; Young, 2004 as cited in Lee & Kwak, 2014, p. 310). With the following statements in mind, it can be deduced that humor is akin to a double-edged sword which could either bolster or dampen the human spirit.

As mentioned earlier, protesters can use political humor and not be held responsible for it. It is because jokes are by nature impersonal and indirect which is an advantage as it absolves anyone of any legal responsibility and guilt (Brandes, 1977). According to Marjolein Hart (n.d.), who is the head of the History Research Department at the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands, in her article *The Role of Humor in Protest Culture* she stated that “humor tends to disarm the opponent, as to react in a serious way to a joke is generally not done (p. 198).” It means that people do not normally respond seriously and aggressively against jokes for it is seen as just a play of words and is technically not directed to them (even if they know it is); therefore, the receiver of the jokes somewhat becomes defenseless against it which makes them vulnerable and open for attack. As the author also explained in her other article entitled *Humour and Social Protest: An Introduction* that since humor is flexible as it can have one form but conveys multiple meanings, “protesters can always refer to the excuse they were “only” joking; meanwhile, the critical points are made, nevertheless (Hart, 2007, p. 19).” This is why humor is seen by activists as a powerful tool against the oppressors. Hart’s account underscores humor as a useful mechanism in social dissent and challenging the status quo: “Often, humor furthered the development of the collective identity of a social movement, whereas in several cases humour acted as a powerful communication tool, serving as a true “weapon of the weak”” (Hart, 2007, p. 1).

However, we cannot always assume that all jokes are forms of protests by just considering the jokes alone. As Christie Davies (2007, p. 305) pointed out, what really makes

jokes a protest is not the content of the jokes per se but rather how the joke-tellers behaved as they express their humor. Some researchers might also add that a group's intention for delivering a joke is also a significant element that could define a joke as a protest.

There already are some researches that studied the effects of satirical political humor on the success of social protests. These articles further support the hypothesis that making use of political humor in protests is indeed an effective strategy to disarm the opposing party. For example, according to Nikolai Zlobin (n.d.) in his article *Humor as Political Protest*, he explained that the use of humor as a form of political protest is widespread in Russia and Soviet Union. The jokes used were commonly innuendoes pertaining to their leader and other politicians, exhibiting their objection to their leader's regime. Similarly, Stanley Brandes (1977) expounded in his article *Peaceful Protest: Spanish Political Humor in a Time of Crisis* that in the late 1975, after the leader of Spain died, ending his dictatorship, the nationalists found it as an opportunity for them to end their struggle for freedom and begin expressing their own political ideas and values. This is when insulting and accusatory jokes became prevalent all over the country.

According to Ford et al., (2016, p. 2), "antisocial and disparaging humor can play in legitimizing prejudice and in potentially subverting prejudice and antisocial norms." In both situations, jokes served as a peaceful yet lethal tool that enabled people to freely express their opinions, disapprovals, and rage against unjust leaders and organizations as well as to bring down the hierarchy in one's society and defeat oppression and injustice.

Roy (2007) narrates about the Raging Grannies as a case in point on how humor is creatively used as social protest: "The Raging Grannies are feminist activists who use humor for peace, social justice, women's rights and environmental issues" (Roy, 2007, p. 150). They provide a concrete illustration of humor's potential in mobilizing people into action as pointed out in the article:

The Raging Grannies are a contemporary form of collective resistance. Their weapons are wit and imagination, solidarity and fierce compassion. They challenge stereotypes and authorities, expand our understanding of aging, and transform despair and anger through the use of humor and creativity. (Roy, 2007, p. 163)

In the Philippines, the relevance of humor in the Tagalog plays analyzed by Ancheta point to the capacity of humor to challenge the dominant beliefs and to create a Filipino identity alongside it:

humor in these zarzuelas as nationalist plays becomes an operating textual and cultural device that reconstitute accepted beliefs, render moot and fracture hegemonic normalcies by using comic strategies to open possibilities for deploying the comic within the nation as community, moving now to craft and define its own identity. (Ancheta, 2009/2010, p.321)

The work of Montiel and Estuar (2006) also provide support to the important role of humor in mobilizing people towards political revolt: “Political jokes passed around permitted Filipinos to derogate President Estrada and his allies and provided opportunities to ventilate pent-up social angers” (Montiel and Estuar, 2006, p. 105).

These studies lay down the connection between humor and social protests in the form of participation in collective action, in particular. Marjolein t’ Hart (2007) explains this vividly in her article:

Joking often cuts through great obstacles better and more forcefully than being serious would. Criticism expressed in a joking manner is more difficult to refute by “rational” arguments. Authority and power can melt, as the invitation to laugh with one another appeals to all-human feelings and breaks down “official” barriers. As such, humour certainly constitutes one of the “weapons of the weak.” (t Hart, 2007, p. 8)

With that being said, it is evident that humor and puns are better choices for weapon, specifically for the minorities and the oppressed, as these words cut through their opponents without actually wounding them.

Some of the studies in this chapter established how humor can serve as a catalyst for psychological well being of individuals. These studies revealed that psychological well being pertains a person’s capability to reappraise and maintain a positive affect even if faced with a negative situation. It also explained that humor can boost one’s self-esteem which in turn

promotes greater self-value and life satisfaction. Lastly, it established how humor can strengthen interpersonal relationships and reduce social conflicts and awkwardness.

These literatures established the importance of sense of humor not only in the enhancement of well being of a person but also in the promotion of collective ties and actions. Humor serves as a social tool that individuals can use in protest groups and social movements, and as a mechanism by which a group can challenge an oppressor and point out the flaws of an organization.

Methodology

This study utilized a survey that included the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003), Psychological Well Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) and a collective action questionnaire adapted from the work of Zaal et al. (2011).

Participants

The participants are college students enrolled in two universities in the province of Benguet, Philippines. The respondents for this study were chosen through a multi-stage random sampling. The first step entailed preparing a list of universities and colleges from which the two universities were randomly chosen. From the randomly selected universities, the participating colleges were also selected by chance. The list of classes during the semester was secured from the office of the Deans of the selected college. These classes were assigned numbers. The final list of participating classes was also randomly selected.

Five hundred thirty-nine (539) undergraduate students participated in this survey. This sample is comprised of 251 females and 288 males. The mean age of the participants is 20.5056 with the majority (51.58%) of them reporting to be in their junior year in college.

Instruments

The survey instrument comprised of four sections: a. basic demographic information about the respondent; b. Rod Martin's Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ); c. Carol Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well Being (PWB); and d. items on collective action (adapted from Zaal et al., 2011).

The HSQ, a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree), is comprised of 32 items that would yield to four measures of humor styles—affiliative humor, self-enhancing humor, aggressive humor and self-defeating humor. The internal consistencies of the four scales are adequate, as demonstrated by Cronbach alphas ranging from .77 to .81 specifically the values are as follows: affiliative humor: 0.80; self-enhancing humor: 0.81; aggressive humor: 0.77; and self-defeating humor: 0.80 (Martin et al, 2003). The first two types are considered in this study as the benevolent forms of humor while the latter two styles are referred to as malevolent humor. To elaborate, the succeeding table presents the characteristics of the four humor styles:

Table 1: Description of Rod Martin’s Humor Styles

Humor Styles	Description
Affiliative Humor	Tendency to share humor with others, tell jokes and funny stories, amuse others, make others laugh, enjoy laughing along with others.
Self-Enhancing Humor	Tendency to maintain a humorous outlook on life even when not with others, use humor in coping with stress, cheer oneself up with humor
Aggressive Humor	Tendency to use humor to disparage, put down, or manipulate others; use of ridicule, offensive humor, compulsive expression of humor even when inappropriate
Self-Defeating Humor	Tendency to amuse others at one’s own expense, self-disparaging humor; laughing along with others when being ridiculed or put down; using humor to hide one’s true feelings from self and others

(Martin, 2003)

The PWB is an 84-item scale that has six dimensions, namely, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance which are measured on a 6-point format, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The table below summarizes the descriptions for each dimension of well being according to Carol Ryff.

The internal consistencies (coefficient alpha) for each of the six scales, namely Autonomy (0.83), Environmental Mastery (0.86), Personal Growth (0.85), Positive relations with others (0.88), Purpose in life (0.88) and Self-Acceptance (0.91) are sufficient (Ryff, 1989).

Table 2: Description of Carol Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well Being

Dimensions of Psychological Well Being	DEFINITION	
	High Scorer	Low Scorer
AUTONOMY	Is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards.	Is concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways.
ENVIRONMENTAL MASTERY	Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values.	Has difficulty managing everyday affairs; feels unable to change or improve surrounding context; is unaware of surrounding opportunities; lacks sense of control over external world.
PERSONAL GROWTH	Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expanding; is open to new experiences; has sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways	Has a sense of personal stagnation; lacks sense of improvement or expansion over time; feels bored and uninterested with life; feels unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors.

	that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness.	
POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH OTHERS	Has warm satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships.	Has few close, trusting relationships with others; finds it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others; is isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others.
PURPOSE IN LIFE	Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living.	Lacks a sense of meaning in life; has few goals or aims, lacks sense of direction; does not see purpose of past life; has no outlook or beliefs that give life meaning.
SELF-ACCEPTANCE	Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life.	Feels dissatisfied with self; is disappointed with what has occurred in past life; is troubled about certain personal qualities; wishes to be different than what he or she is.

Ryff (1989)

The permissions to use the HSQ and PWB scales were sought by and granted to the researcher through email correspondences with the authors.

The 15-item collective action questionnaire was adapted from the items used by Zaal et al. (2011). Fifteen items, measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (very unlikely) to 6 (very likely) indicate benevolent and hostile forms of collective action. The issue used for this study was changed to a topic deemed more salient and relevant for college students (i.e. tuition fee). Four items (items 1-4) from the questionnaire were used to determine the general willingness of the participants to be part of a collective action. Six items (items 5-10) were used as indicators of benevolent collective action while five items (items 11-15) were used as

indicators of hostile collective action (see appendix for the items used in the study). The internal consistency reliability of the benevolent and hostile collective action items are 0.946 and 0.942, respectively.

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered in the respective rooms of the students. Students were only allowed to answer the questionnaire once. This was reiterated prior to the administration of the questionnaire to avoid duplication. On the average, the instrument was completed by the participants in about 25-30 minutes. The data collection took place from February to May 2018.

Results

The study measured the correlation between (1) humor styles scores and psychological well being scores and, (2) humor styles scores and collective action scores. The strength and direction of the relationships are reported in the tables below.

Humor Styles Mean Scores

Table 3 below shows the mean scores obtained in the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and the Scales of Psychological Well Being. A higher mean score would be interpreted as a stronger inclination for the variable being measured. The sample mean score on affiliative humor style obtained the highest value (36.9757) while aggressive humor style scored lowest (29.645) relative to the other humor styles (note: the highest possible score for any humor style is 56). This therefore means that as a whole, the sample tends to be characterized more by affiliative humor and least of aggressive humor, i.e. the participants in this study seem to have a propensity to “share humor with others, tell jokes and funny stories, amuse others, make others laugh, enjoy laughing along with others” while having the least inclination “to use humor to disparage, put down, or manipulate others; use of ridicule, offensive humor, compulsive expression of humor even when inappropriate.”

Psychological Well Being Mean Scores

As for psychological well being, the sample mean score is highest for personal growth (58.7615) and lowest for autonomy (51.0551) (note: the highest possible score for any dimension of psychological well being is 84). The sample can therefore be described as scoring relatively high compared to other dimensions in their tendency for “a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expanding; is open to new experiences; has sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness.” On the other hand, the participants’ tendency to be “self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards” is somewhat low compared to the other psychological well being dimensions.

Table 3: Mean Scores for Humor Styles and Psychological Well Being

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Affiliative humor score	36.9757	6.10888	534
Self-enhancing humor score	35.0662	12.18642	529
Aggressive humor score	29.6435	5.17554	533
Self defeating humor score	31.2622	6.97480	534
Autonomy	51.0551	5.89486	526
Environmental Mastery	52.9477	6.52963	516
Personal Growth	58.7615	18.65000	524
Positive Relations	56.0078	7.71280	512
Purpose in Life	55.6105	7.48444	516
Self acceptance	53.1836	7.05919	523

Collective Action Mean Scores

The table below (Table 4) shows the mean scores obtained in the Collective Action Questionnaire. A higher mean score would be interpreted as a stronger likelihood to engage in the collective action being described. For this study, relatively high sample mean scores were obtained for items 5 (“*I would be willing to support participating in discussion against tuition fee increase*”), 6 (“*I would be willing to support attending meetings against tuition fee increase*”), 9 (“*I would be willing to support signing the petition against unconstitutionality of tuition fee increase*”), This pattern means that as a whole, the sample tends to be characterized by a general likelihood to provide support through benevolent forms of collective actions when faced with a social issue/crisis. These benevolent forms of collective action include attendance in meetings and discussions or signing of petitions and can be deemed as leaning towards acceptable and peaceful examples of collective behaviors.

Lower sample mean values were obtained for collective action items 13 (“*I would be willing to support throwing up barricades at organizations that are held responsible for tuition fee increase*”), 14 (“*I would be willing to support defacing the building of organizations that are held responsible for tuition fee increase*”), and 15 (“*I would be willing to support committing sabotage at organizations that are responsible for tuition fee increase*”). Notice that these items pertain to hostile forms of collective action. Thus, the obtained mean scores appear parallel to the participants’ general tendency and agreement to behave collectively using acceptable and nonviolent forms of collective actions.

Table 4: Collective Action Mean Scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
collective action item1	537	2.5400	2.01736
collective action item2	532	2.9850	2.04648
collective action item3	536	2.9160	1.96855
collective action item4	535	2.9065	1.92428

collective action item5	536	3.1175	1.96016
collective action item6	534	3.0225	1.92920
collective action item7	537	2.9460	1.86355
collective action item8	537	2.7281	1.86699
collective action item9	535	3.2523	1.99575
collective action item10	534	2.4944	1.86580
collective action item11	535	2.0449	1.87279
collective action item12	537	2.1434	1.82640
collective action item13	533	1.8574	1.80911
collective action item14	537	1.8659	1.80502
collective action item15	537	1.7076	1.80231

Correlation between Humor Styles and Psychological Well Being

The findings of this study showed that there is a significant correlation between humor styles and psychological well being scores. In particular, results reveal that the benevolent forms of humor (affiliative and self enhancing humor styles) and dimensions of well being are positively correlated. This means that as affiliative and self enhancing humor styles increase, the specific indicators of psychological well being also increase. To be more specific, affiliative humor is positively correlated with autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations

with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance while self-enhancing humor is directly associated with environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance.

On the other hand, the malevolent forms of humor styles (aggressive and self-defeating humor styles) are negatively associated with psychological well being. Thus, as aggressive and self-defeating humor styles increase, dimensions of psychological well being diminish. Aggressive humor is indirectly related with the six measures of psychological well being while self-defeating humor is negatively correlated with all dimensions except for one (i.e. personal growth).

Note, however, that these correlations are relatively weak. Nonetheless, these results provide support to literature showing that humor—i.e., the benevolent forms are associated with positive well being while the malevolent forms are linked with negative well being. This, therefore, not just provides evidence to the idea that only specific humor styles are possibly connected with better adjustment but that certain humor types may even be related to diminished psychological health.

Table 5: Significant Correlations between Humor Styles and Psychological Well Being Dimensions

Humor styles	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal growth	Positive relations	Purpose in life	Self acceptance
Affiliative humor	.120**	.141**	.099*	.371**	.250**	.218**
Self enhancing humor	Not significant	.108*	Not significant	.152**	.147**	.092*
Aggressive humor	-.132**	-.197**	-.103*	-.173**	-.261**	-.229**
Self-defeating humor	-.202**	-.152**	Not significant	-.124**	-.192**	-.180**

** significant at .01

* significant at .05

Correlation between Humor Styles and Collective Action

The results of this survey show several significant correlations between humor styles and collective action. In particular, affiliative humor appears to be inversely associated with indicators of hostile forms of collective action (e.g., demonstrations, illegal wild strikes, throwing up barricades). Thus, participants who employ humor that features “sharing humor with others, tell jokes and funny stories, amuse others, make others laugh, enjoy laughing along with others” may tend to have a lower propensity to engage in hostile and direct forms of collective action. The other dimension of benevolent humor--self-enhancing humor style, is not significantly associated with any of the collective action indicators. Aggressive humor style is positively correlated with items that indicate more direct and violent forms of collective behaviors which seem to be the opposite trend relative to affiliative humor style. To further support this trend, aggressive humor style is negatively correlated with the benevolent form of collective action (i.e., petition signing). Lastly, self-defeating humor is directly associated with joint social actions, particularly the direct and aggressive collective behaviors.

Significant Correlations between Humor Styles and Collective Action items

Table 6: Affiliative Humor Style and Collective Action

Humor styles	Collective action # 10	Collective action 11	Collective action 12	Collective action 13	Collective action 14	Collective action 15
Affiliative humor	-.120**	-.204**	-.120**	-.199**	-.212**	-.165**

** significant at .01

* significant at .05

Table 7: Aggressive Humor Style and Collective Action

Humor styles	Collective action # 9	Collective action 13	Collective action 14	Collective action 15
Aggressive humor	-.091*	.114**	.101*	.102*

** significant at .01

* significant at .05

Table 8: Self-Defeating Humor Style and Collective Action

Humor styles	Collective action 2	Collective action 10	Collective action 11	Collective action 12	Collective action 13	Collective action 14	Collective action 15
Self-defeating humor	.101*	.091*	.093*	.111*	.144**	.105*	.130**

** significant at .01

* significant at .05

Discussion

The findings from this study reveal that specific humor styles may have a significant relationship with dimensions of well being and forms of collective social action. This demonstrates that humor styles may have a relationship on individual level functioning as well as group level behavior and dynamics.

The question that this study aimed to answer at the onset is whether or not humor is a valuable human resource—a character strength that correlates with psychological well being and social collective action. The findings hint us to the following possibilities. One, with affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles being positively associated with positive well being, we are inclined to think that humor is indeed a character strength that may have a promising impact on a person’s level of psychological health and adjustment. However, the answer does not seem to end there. Results show that, aggressive and self-defeating humor styles move in the opposite direction relative to specific indicators of psychological well being. Thus, humor seems to be a peril with respect to one’s welfare and adjustment. Clearly, results suggest that we need to explicitly distinguish which humor style may be associated to one’s level of psychological functioning—i.e., which humor style may be linked with either the beneficial or detrimental indicators of individual functioning.

Following a similar trend, findings reveal that humor styles may also manifest contradicting associations with collective actions. In particular, affiliative humor style seems to be associated with lower involvement in collective actions while aggressive humor style appears to coincide with greater likelihood for collective action participation. Taking these results a step

further, humor styles can therefore be implicated to one's type of social activism, with one humor style possibly inhibiting one's involvement while the other humor style advancing the individual's collaborative participation.

Humor's paradoxical nature can be seen in the results of this work. Certain humor styles (particularly affiliative humor style) may be on one hand, associated positively with psychological health but negatively with one's participation in hostile social collective protests, on the other. Still, other humor styles (aggressive humor style) may be negatively related with psychological well being while being positively correlated with direct forms of social collective behaviors. This further accentuates the varying impact of humor depending on its form or style. Hence, benevolent humor styles may do us good with respect to our individual functioning but may be inhibitory when it comes to our engagement in collective behaviors while malevolent humor styles may not work for our psychological health's best interest but can facilitate our collaboration with others towards social activism.

Limitations and Future Research

This study, being correlational in nature, inevitably remains inconclusive as to whether humor is the predictor of psychological well being and collective action or vice versa. For instance, is it affiliative humor that led to better psychological adjustment or is it the other way around? Similarly, is it aggressive behavior that can explain for one's less positive psychological health or is it the one that creates this tendency for malevolent humor? Following this line of thought, where do humor styles stand with respect to one's propensity for collective action? Is it possible to argue that only malevolent humor is conducive for hostile and direct forms of social protest such as throwing up barricades and illegal strikes? Still, is it possible that there are other unidentified variables that can account for the connections of these factors? These questions, being beyond the scope of this study are possible jump off points in future research endeavors.

The results of this study could also be enriched through a validation of the pattern that emerged. For instance, instead of random sampling, the study can purposively sample individuals engaged in each of the two types of collective action, benevolent and hostile. These groups of individuals can then be assessed in terms of their well being and humor styles which can give us a closer understanding of the processes and dynamics between these factors. Another related limitation of this current work is the fact that the participants primarily belong to a

younger age group with a mean age of 20.5056. It is therefore crucial to validate the results of this work using an older age group.

The weak significant correlations may offer support to the relationship of humor with psychological well being as well as with collective action. However, these results may also inevitably cast some doubt on whether or not humor is essentially connected to both psychological well being and collective action. Lastly, the measurement of the variables in this study is only as good as the instruments used in this study. This therefore directs future studies to assess the usage of the instrument for the humor styles. Unfortunately, there is strong indication that the validity of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) maybe inaccurate (Heintz & Ruch, 2015; Ruch & Heintz, 2016, 2017). These studies have questioned the psychometric quality of the HSQ. Given these considerable drawbacks of the measurement instrument, it is important to corroborate the findings using additional humor-related instruments.

Conclusion

In sum, findings from this survey showed that humor styles are significantly associated with psychological well being and types of collective action. The direction of the relationship between these variables depends on the specific humor style and the level of well being and type of collective action being considered. Benevolent forms of humor (affiliative and self enhancing humor styles) and positive well being are positively correlated while malevolent humor styles (aggressive and self-defeating humor styles) are negatively associated with psychological well being. Benevolent humor style, particularly, affiliative humor appears to decrease as hostile forms of collective action increase while malevolent humor style (aggressive and self-defeating) is directly associated with explicit and hostile forms of collective behaviors. Despite the relatively weak correlations, these statistically significant results provide support to humor's link with well being and collective action. More importantly, these findings provide evidence for the paradoxical nature of humor, behaving as a double-edged sword.

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Appendix: Collective Action Scale

NO	STATEMENTS	SCALE						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	I would individually do something against the plan to increase tuition fees.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I would do something together with others against tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I would be willing to support becoming a member of a collective action group that takes a stance against tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I would be willing to support becoming a volunteer for a collective action group that takes a stance against tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I would be willing to support participating in discussion against tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	I would be willing to support attending meetings against tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I would be willing to support participating in plenary meetings against tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	I would be willing to support writing flyers against tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	I would be willing to support signing the petition against unconstitutionality of tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	I would be willing to support taking part in street theatre or demonstrations against tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	I would be willing to support the organization of illegal wild strikes at organizations that are responsible for tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	I would be willing to support the occupation of the buildings of organizations that are held responsible for tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	I would be willing to support throwing up barricades at organizations that are held responsible for tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	I would be willing to support defacing the building of organizations that are held responsible for tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	I would be willing to support committing sabotage at organizations that are responsible for tuition fee increase.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6