

Industriya ng “P.I”: Phenomenology of cursing and bad mouthing in the Philippine film and television industry

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Abstract

This research was stimulated by an open letter from a bit player who raised his complaint regarding a director who verbally abused him while recording a television show. In the letter, the complainant cited the definition of culture by Geertz as the “webs of significance that man himself has spun.” With this, the researchers came up with the term “P.I.” culture (Putang Ina Culture), defined in this research as the culture of cursing, bad-mouthing, swearing, and foul and abusive language inside the Philippine film and television industry. This study aimed to describe and interpret the “P.I.” culture lived experiences of talents and production team members working in the Philippine film and television industry from 2006 to 2016. This study is essential as it can raise awareness and bring change in the practices inside the said industries and as a basis for policy-making. This quantitative descriptive and qualitative phenomenological study utilized Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The result of this study presents that “P.I.” culture exists, and the commonly shared experiences of the participants are a curse, conformity, and unmet expectation. This study concludes that cursing, bad-mouthing, swearing, and foul and abusive language that the people inside the industry have made themselves become a culture and that most people inside the industry experience and conform to it. The researchers recommend that future researchers may conduct other data-gathering techniques to get a more in-depth result of the lived experiences of the participants.

Keywords: Cursing and Bad mouthing, Film and Television Industry, Foul and Abusive Language, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Phenomenology

1. Introduction

The television and film industry is considered one of the most stressful workplaces wherein people experience high pressure regarding their demanding jobs, production finances, daily shootings, hectic schedules, and meeting deadlines that causes a hostile environment that can lead to a culture of bad mouthing and cursing. Russell (2011) mentioned that the occurrence and spreading of foul language in the workplace had been studied in some research, and it has been more commonly found in high-stress work. Many will say that stress and pressure in the industry are part of the course, and to an extent, the film and television industry will always be known as a fast-paced, exciting, but demanding profession (Jennings, 2014). Making a film is stressful, and people must remember that many careers and funds are on the line every time the camera rolls (Marshall, 2012).

This research was stimulated by an open letter of a bit player to Cathy Garcia-Molina, a Filipino film and television director who directed most of the romantic comedy stories under Star Cinema, including the 2014 romantic-comedy television series “Forevermore.” The open letter was a narration of the alleged verbal abuse that the actor experienced during the shooting of a local television show that Garcia-Molina directed. In this study, the term “P.I.” culture is defined as “the practice of using foul and abusive language, specifically the word “Putang Ina” inside the film and television industry production. It also includes nonverbal actions that connote abuse, violence, and mistreatment. It is the collective term for cursing, bad-mouthing, swearing, and using foul and abusive language.”

Stillwater (2009) stated that the word “P.I.,” or “Putang Ina,” is the common swear word of Filipinos which is derived from both Spanish and Filipino terms, ‘puta’ means whore, while ‘ina’ means mother. “P.I.” is a shorthand for its more extended variant ‘Putang ina mo’, which means, “Your mother is a whore.” Cathy Garcia-Molina’s case validates the researchers’ decision to use the term “P.I.” in the study. This supports the phenomenon of “P.I.” culture, as Kaye &

Sapolsky (2009) stated, not only rife and existing in television shows but also in the making and behind-the-scenes of these shows where production takes place. Macarayan (2013) described how the treatment among the production team and talents goes in the production field when people get stressed out once the production staff gets scolded by their superiors, which they are not an exception. The cycle goes on from the director verbally harassing the assistant director and the production assistant abusing the talents. They can do nothing because they are at the bottom of the hierarchy. This is the culture inside the film and television industry.

A phenomenological approach was chosen to explore the lived experiences of selected talents in the television and film industry regarding the cursing and bad-mouthing culture. According to Van Manen (2007) and (Cilesiz, 2010), phenomenology deals with the individual lived experience of human existence, aiming to reach an understanding to define a particular phenomenon. A phenomenological approach is helpful in this study since the researchers attempt to describe the lived experience and perceptions of the employees regarding the existing phenomenon of “P.I. culture” inside the film and television industry production. This study intends to find talents and members of the film and television industry production team that have experienced the “P.I.” culture with the end goal of describing and understanding their experiences.

This research aims to describe and interpret the lived experience of selected talents and production team members on cursing, bad-mouthing, foul and abusive language, and other negative nonverbal practices inside the Philippine film and television industry.

This study aimed to focus on the following:

1. To determine the occurrence level of “P.I.” culture in the Philippine film and television industry.
2. To describe the lived experiences of the selected talents and production team members from the Philippine film and television industry on “P.I.” culture.
3. To identify the shared experiences of the talents and members of the production team regarding “P.I.” culture.
4. To understand the selected talents and production team members' interpretation of their “P.I.” culture experiences.

2. Literature review

2.1. Conceptual framework of the study

This framework presents the ideology of the researchers on the research problem to be explored. This described the relationships between specific variables identified in the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



This study shows the linear process of the research. The first diagram is the study’s scope, the film and television production industry where the cursing and bad-mouthing practice or “P.I.” culture takes place, and the lived experience of the people who have undergone it. These lived experiences will be explored by the researchers. The research focused on describing and interpreting the lived experiences of the respondents who have gone through the “P.I.” culture. The researchers chose the film and television industry as the scope of bad-mouthing and cursing. Thus, the practice of bad-mouthing and cursing in the film and television industry influences the lived experiences of the respondents.

The film and television industry will be the stimulant of the “P.I.” culture that may influence or affect the lived experience of the research participants. The following process is the lived experiences of the research participants; under those is the bad-mouthing/cursing or “P.I.” culture practiced inside the said industries. This is the form of communication used in the film and television industry. The level and frequency of the usage of foul and abusive language in the film and television industry affect the respondents' lived experience in the sense that it can strengthen or weaken their experience of “P.I.” culture. For instance, if people in the film and television industry use bad and curse words often, then the lived experiences of the respondents will also be prevalent. On the other hand, if the usage of bad and curse words in the film and television industry is limited, then the lived experiences of the respondents will also be limited. The last process is the Phenomenology of “P.I.” culture, which will result from this study.

2.2. Stressful workplace

Russell (2011) mentioned that the occurrence and spreading of foul language in the workplace had been studied in some research, and it has been more commonly found in high-stress work. Many will say that stress and pressure in the industry are parred for the course, and to an extent, the film and television industry will always be known as a fast-paced, exciting, but demanding profession (Jennings, 2014). Being part of a film is stressful because money is involved every time the camera starts filming. Film and television productions have prominent personalities that depend on scripts and deadlines that must be followed so that the production will not lose expenses which results in a stressful workplace because of the pressure experienced by the people in the industry (Marshall, 2012).

2.3. Foul and abusive language

Cursing, swearing, or cursing is part of people’s daily lives. Someone is expected to verbally say expletive and bad words because most people are doing it. People tend to slip up and curse even if they do not intend to say it because it has become part of their everyday vocabulary (Aguilar, 2016). A reasonable employer should do so once it knows or should have known of such behavior. Using foul and abusive language in the workplace can undermine trust and confidence, leading to claims of constructive unfair dismissal, harassment, or discrimination (Williams, 2006). In 2006, an article by Williams said that having a bad language culture is a danger that creates a hostile and intimidating environment that might rise to bullying and harassment.

The key is whether the pattern of behavior undermines the implied duty of trust and confidence between the employer and employee. It offends the self-esteem and dignity of the employees. For example, suppose an employee experiences offensive, abusive, intimidating, denigrating, bullying, humiliating, patronizing, infantile, and insulting words and behavior”. In that case, an employer must do something about it (Williams, 2006).

2.4. Profanity and obscenity

“People use [profanity] as a weapon... It is a way of trying to show dominance,” said Dennis Gibb in an article by Federico-O’Murchu (2014). Not only employers in the workplace are capable of profanity. In an article by Alaniz (2015), he discussed how employees choose and use profane and obscene language inside a company. Employers must consider that saying expletive words to their employees will result in legal issues. Their employees can file a case against them because workers are protected by National Labor Relations Act (Alaniz, 2015). In the Philippines, the workers are protected by the Labor Code of the Philippines by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). In a case by Delos Reyes, a university professor, versus Perlas, a student was being cursed by Delos Reyes using the word ‘anak ng puta’ or the daughter of a whore. This resulted in termination because saying expletive words is grounds for termination under Article 297 of the Labor Code (LawPhil, 2020).

For some, profanity is accepted, but for others, it is unacceptable, and for organizations, it may be both. The major problem with this concept is that the acceptance of receiving profane language depends on the person receiving it, so the implications for this may be subjective. While profane and obscene terms have their lowest to the highest degree, this culture in the workplace must not be tolerated (Alaniz, 2015)

2.5. Cursing and bad-mouthing

Cursing seems acceptable everywhere, in television, films, the workplace, and even the political spectrum, which can have adverse consequences for children if they are exposed to channels saying expletive words (Blau, 2014). The obscene verbal attack can be emotionally devastating; Cursing can also leave them confused, lowering their self-esteem. According to HealthyChildren.org, children start mimicking who is cursed even if they do not understand the meaning of words. Cursing them will make them believe that profanities are an acceptable way of dealing with anger, frustration, and stress.

Cursing and bad-mouthing practices can spark positive and negative impacts; researchers Baruch and Jenkins (2007) found cursing is effective in office and workplace environments. Motivation for using curse words can be impulsivity and masculinity. Some people use curse words to achieve personal states to affect others, bullying, for example (Jay, 2009). Cursing not only offends, anger, annoys, intimidates, and hurts some colleagues but can also intimidate others.

2.6. Swearing

“Swearing is not only rife and exists in television shows and films but also in the making and behind-the-scenes of these shows where the production takes place” (Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009). According to Johnson and Lewis (2010), “research has shown that swearers are perceived as socially inept, incompetent, and untrustworthy.” “Swearing is industry language. For as long as we are alive, it will not change. You have got to be boisterous to get results,” said Gordon Ramsay, the famous chef who curses at the contenders of a cooking competition live on television. Jay and Janschewitz (2008) stated that the primary purpose of swearing is to express emotions such as anger and frustration. Swearing depends on experience, culture, and language conventions.

Yehuda Baruch and Stuart Jenkins' 2007 study cites some of the benefits of profanity and its effects on women. According to the findings, men curse to gain respect in the workplace, while females curse because they feel inferior. Despite the double standard, the study also found that women use profane language more in companies to help them assert their dominance against men.

3. Research method

This study is a mixed type of research. It is a descriptive quantitative and phenomenological qualitative study. Specifically, the researchers utilized a mixed method approach, using a quantitative research paradigm for one phase of the study and a qualitative research paradigm for another. For the quantitative phase of the study, the research locale was conducted via an online survey, specifically through Google Forms. For the qualitative phase of the study, there were different research locales for each participant. These locales are: Dasmarinas Cavite; Imus, Cavite; Quezon City; Quezon Avenue; Ortigas, Pasig City and Medicion, Imus, Cavite. The semi-structured interviews were done in the locales chosen by each participant for their convenience and comfortability as they were asked to be interviewed outside of their

workplace as the focus of the interview is sensitively related to their work. Choosing the locales outside the participants’ workplaces helped make them feel more at ease and open to sharing their stories during the interview.

There were two groups of respondents for the quantitative phase of this research study. The first group was 50 talents or bit players from the Philippine film and television industry. The second group was 50 members of the production team, also from the Philippine film and television industry. For the qualitative phase of this study, the researchers selected eight respondents to be interviewed. Four respondents were from the television industry, and four were from the film industry. Furthermore, television and film industry respondents were subdivided into two groups. The first group comprises the talents (for example, bit players, extras, and actors). The second group includes the production team members (e.g., the director, producer, and production manager).

The difference between the respondents of the quantitative phase of the study and the participants of the qualitative phase is that not all of the 100 respondents had experienced the “P.I.” culture. In contrast, all 8 participants of the qualitative phase had a “P.I.” culture experience. The researchers used a self-administered survey questionnaire for the quantitative phase of the study. This is to prove that the phenomenon of cursing and bad-mouthing in the Philippine film and television industry exists and to check if there is a high percentage of “P.I. culture.” The first part of the questionnaire contains primary data about the status of the chosen respondents, such as their name, age, working position, number of years active in the industry, several Film and Television projects they are involved in, and e-mail address. The questionnaire used was a four-point scale and closed-ended questions.

For the qualitative phase of this study, the research instrument used is a semi-structured interview guide. This was used in the study because it allowed the researchers to conduct the necessary information that will help understand the phenomena of bad-mouthing and cursing in the Philippine film and television industry. To address the validity of the study, the researchers followed three strategies. First is participant validation, wherein the researchers obtained feedback on the study’s findings from the participants. The second strategy is ecological validity. In line with this, the researchers collected qualitative data in each participant’s chosen setting. This is due to the topic’s sensitivity related to their respective workplaces. Researchers also used the third strategy, which is reflexivity. The researchers did multiple analyses of the gathered data, analyzed and arrived at the superordinate themes.

In the quantitative phase of the study, the researchers conducted an online survey questionnaire to the respondents who are working as talents and members of the production team for the researchers to know if the phenomenon of cursing and bad-mouthing exists in the Philippine film and television industry. The next step was testing for reliability. The researchers also conducted a pilot test before distributing it to the respondents. The researchers consulted a statistician to check the reliability of the questions on our survey form. To know the reliability of the test questionnaire, the statistician utilized the tool Cronbach’s Alpha N of Items, which garners an alpha of .75614. The researcher allotted time for data gathering conduction from June to August to complete 100 respondents from the talents and members of the production team inside the Philippine film and television workplace. The researchers started the data gathering necessary for the study.

In the qualitative phase of the study, the researchers conducted a semi-structured focused interview with each of the eight film and television respondents to get the narrative of their lived experiences of the “P.I” culture. This form of interviewing will allow the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in light of the participant’s responses. The investigator can probe exciting and vital areas that arise. First, the researchers sent letters to the informants, including the interview guide, to gather the qualitative data for this study. After that, the researchers scheduled the interview with respondents. The respondents were asked to sign consent for confidentiality. During the interview with the respondents, the researchers conducted an audio recording. Also, they kept field notes describing the nonverbal communication and the researcher’s general impressions of issues, such as the tone of the interview and the respondent’s ability to retrieve information for discussion. Lastly, the interviews were transcribed by the researchers.

4. Data analysis

The researchers used the Likert scale to analyze the study’s quantitative data. These describe the interpretation of the survey questionnaire on both Talents and Members of Production Team respondents from the Philippine film and television industry.

Table 1: Likert Scale Interpretation

Value	Description	Mean Range
4	Always	3.25 to 4.00
3	Sometimes	2.50 to 3.24
2	Rarely	1.75 to 2.49
1	Never	1.00 to 1.74

To obtain the results of each survey question, the researchers will utilize the Frequency Analysis to check the occurrence of P.I. Culture inside the workplace. Also, this research used Descriptive Statistics to summarize the data. For the qualitative phase of the study, the researchers will analyze the interview transcript by the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). In this study, IPA is applied to our interview data, which are audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researchers did not use a pre-ordained list of themes since the research aims to explore the respondent’s perception of what is important about the phenomenon in question rather than to look at what the researcher deems important.

The first stage in analyzing the data was reading and rereading the transcript several times. This is for the researchers to be familiarized with the data. Once familiarized, the researchers started making notes that reflected initial thoughts and observations in response to the transcript. In the second analysis stage, the researchers further reviewed the transcript and started to identify and label themes. A theme captures something important about the data about the research question and represents some patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes titles are conceptual, and they should capture something about the essential quality of what is represented by the text (Willig, 2008).

In the third stage, the researchers attempt to introduce structure into the analysis (Willig, 2008). This is also the process of clustering themes where the researchers listed the themes identified in another table and thought about the themes about one another. Clusters of themes need labels that capture their essence, such as in vivo terms used by the respondents, brief quotations, or descriptive labels (Willig, 2008). In the fourth stage, the researchers produced a summary table of the structured themes, including the in vivo statements illustrating each theme. The researchers only included the themes ‘that capture the quality of the participant’s experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Willig, 2008).

5. Findings and discussion

5.1. Quantitative results

The researchers obtained the data via electronic and online surveying wherein the researchers posted in Facebook groups to gather respondents; also, the researchers did message them to let them allow us to conduct a survey questionnaire for them to answer our survey that will be answered via Google Forms. Each table and graph can provide basic information about variables of interest using frequency analysis. The present subsection reviews these simple statistics.

Table 2: Talents Responses to the Self-administered survey questionnaire

Question	Scale							
	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Always	
	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
1	2	4	8	16	23	46	17	34
2	3	6	17	34	19	36	12	24
3	4	8	21	42	15	30	10	20
4	8	16	17	32	17	34	9	18
5	5	10	19	38	20	40	6	12
6	12	24	14	28	19	38	5	10
7	17	34	12	24	14	28	7	14

Table 3; Members of the Production Team Responses to the Self-administered survey questionnaire

Question	Scale							
	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Always	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	1	2	12	24	22	44	15	30
2	6	12	17	34	19	36	8	16
3	5	10	25	50	13	26	7	14
4	8	16	22	44	14	28	6	12
5	5	10	19	38	20	40	6	12
6	6	12	22	44	15	30	7	14
7	9	18	21	42	14	28	6	12

Table 4: Talents Mean and Interpretation Results

	N	Mean	Interpretation
Informal Type of Communication	50	3.10	Sometimes
Informal Type of Language.”	50	2.78	Sometimes
Bad and Curse Words	50	2.62	Sometimes
Foul and Abusive Language	50	2.50	Sometimes
Curse Word “P.I.”	50	2.76	Sometimes
Experience Being Bad-mouthed or Cursed by any Member of the Production Team	50	2.34	Rarely
Experience Being Cursed with the word "P.I." by any Member of the Production Team	50	2.22	Rarely
Valid N (listwise)	50	2.62	

Table 5: Members of the Production Team Mean and Interpretation Results

	N	Mean	Interpretation
Informal Type of Communication	50	3.02	Sometimes
Informal Type of Language	50	2.58	Sometimes
Bad and Curse Word	50	2.44	Rarely
Foul and Abusive Language	50	2.40	Rarely
Curse Word “P.I.”	50	2.54	Sometimes
Use Bad and Curse Words	50	2.46	Rarely
Use the Curse Word “P.I.”	50	2.34	Rarely
Valid N (listwise)	50	2.54	

Overall mean $2(2.6171 + 2.5400) = 2.5785$ means that P.I. Culture “Sometimes” occurs in Film and Television Industry.

5.2. Qualitative results

In utilizing the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach for the qualitative phase of the study, the researchers produced a set of master themes that pertain to the shared “P.I.” culture experiences of both the talents and members of the production team working inside the Philippine film and television industry. The recurring themes are a curse, conformity, and unmet expectation. Seven out of the eight participants experienced cursing or being cursed while working in Philippine film and television production.

Matrix 1: “Shared Experiences of the Talents and Members of the Production Team”

Themes	Curse	Conformity	Unmet Expectation
Participant 8	Page 2, Line 41-42		Page 3, Lines 67-68
Participant 7	Page 3, Line 56-59	Page 6, Lines 144-146	Page 4, Lines 89-90
Participant 6	Page 4, Line 81-82		Page 4, Line 78-81
Participant 5	Page 5, Lines 108-110	Page 3, Line 74-75	Page 6, Lines 153-154
Participant 4	Page 5, Line 118-119	Page 4, Line 92-94	Page 10, Line 239-241
Participant 3	Page 5, Line 94-95	Page 7, Line 175-176	Page 4, Line 89-93
Participant 2		Page 17, Line 432	
Participant 1	Page 7, Line 199-203	Page 6, Line 172-179	Page 5, Line 144-148

Moreover, six out of the eight participants commonly shared the theme of conformity, meaning the participants have learned to adapt to the phenomenon of “P.I.” culture. Moreover, seven out of the eight participants commonly shared that they think “P.I.” culture occurs because of the unmet expectation of people higher than them.

The researchers found three themes that almost all the eight participants commonly shared. These themes are a curse, conformity, and unmet expectations. With this, the researchers state that “P.I.” culture is rampant in both the television and film industry in the Philippines and that most employees, either members of the production team or talents conform to this “P.I.” culture which is brought about by the stressful working environment that triggers the higher members of the production team to have a reasonable professional expectation from the other members of the production team and talents that if not met causes the occurrence of “P.I.” culture.

6. Contribution of the study

Indeed, this study increased the awareness and improved the perception and attitude of the researchers regarding the phenomenon of “P.I.” culture in the Philippine film and television industry. This study could better describe and interpret the “P.I.” culture phenomenon.

The study has shown that “P.I.” culture exists in the film and television industry workplace as working behind the scene is a stressful profession; because of its inevitable nature, immediate action and proper assessment of the situation should be provided by the production management to avoid further damaging and conflicting issues within the workplace mainly if the same situation and complaints occur repetitively and if disciplinary action and the sanction is needed.

7. Implications of the study

The researchers recommend that if the talents or bit players experience or have undergone workplace bullying, they should impel and protect their rights as a laborer when such incidents or occurrences of being cursed, bad-mouthed, and mistreated arise.

As for the study’s second important participants, the production team members, observing proper behavior and weighing their own could help them deal with their anger issues and do something to reduce it to avoid damaging effects. It could also help them have a better approach to dealing with stress. They should also be sensitive and consider what effect mistreatment and verbal abuse would bring on their co-workers, especially the ones under them. Film and Television Production Companies should enforce policies and regulations regarding workplace bullying. The researchers recommend that they should also impel guidelines on what immediate action should be taken when incidents of cursing, bad-mouthing, and mistreatment are being reported.

Through the help of this study, the laborers (blue-collar workers) can protect their rights as a worker or an employee regarding workplace bullying. The researchers recommend this study to future researchers. They could further broaden

and deepen the study’s relevancy and total growth as a research study. Gathering more information and literature and finding related studies can further the study’s reliability and validity. They could develop and widen their significance to reach all who would and should benefit from this.

Through this, they can also do a related study that can widen the research's scope, significance, and objective. Communication students will also benefit from this study, especially those with performing (acting) or directing (filmmaking) aspirations, and the Faculty and School Administration for developing values and ethical-related curriculum. Media and Communication Practitioners are also part of the study’s recommendation. They also recommend that future researchers get participants for the sampling method who have ten or more years of experience regarding the research problem so they can give more and better data needed in this study.

8. Conclusion

Before the start of this study, the researchers assumed that there would be similarities and differences among the experiences and interpretations of the participants. Indeed, these similarities and differences appeared in the results. The following conclusions can be drawn based on these findings from the participants’ transcribed accounts.

Cursing and bad-mouthing occur because the directors' expectations from the other production team members are unmet. Further, when the expectations of the other members of the production team are not met by the talents, cursing or bad-mouthing occurs. As the “P.I.” culture phenomenon is proven to exist and is commonly viewed as usual and accepted in the film and television industries, the members of the production team and talents learn to conform to it, thus creating the culture itself.

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