



Short Paper  
**Smile!: An Attitude of Filipinos**

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### **Abstract**

A smile is one of the most common nonverbal signals used in communication among humans. After more than 100 years of research on facial expressions, everyone still knows relatively little about the causation of smiling and its social functions. A smile is the major component of a facial display associated with and caused by feelings of happiness or joy. The smiler's motivation may be genuine friendliness or an intent to establish friendly relations. Social smiles appear to be direct behavioral expressions of positive emotional engagement. Through a purposive sampling, this study unlocked and identified selected individuals in terms of how they tend to smile, as well as the causes and consequences of smiling. This study used observation and phenomenological qualitative research methods. Thus, this study sought to answer the following: What are the reasons for smiling? What motivates Filipinos to smile in social interactions? And what attitude does the Filipino display by smiling? This determined how intense the attitude of Filipinos towards smiling was experienced by the respondents. It is noted that there are three attitudes that rose in this study. These are optimistic, appreciative, and sympathizers. Student-respondents used to smile to attract people and to appreciate God's creation, while faculty-respondents used to smile to inspire others in the professional aspect. These are amazingly eminent to the respondents in this study. This concludes that cultural, social, and individual differences influence others by smiling. A smile also influences how people interpret events that make them happy. Also, it shapes the ambiance in different roles that define social interaction whenever they smile.



Differences among the respondents do not alter people's innate and universal tendency to smile when they are happy. Thus, this study recommends creating activities to practice smiling in different situations in life.

Keywords – optimistic, appreciative, sympathizer, smile, motivation

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## INTRODUCTION

A smile is one of the most common nonverbal signals used in communication among humans. Despite this, and despite more than 100 years of research on facial expressions, we still know relatively little about the causation of smiling and its social functions. According to the emotional expression view, a smile is the major component of a facial display associated with and caused by feelings of happiness or joy. Anything that makes a person feel good or happy should produce a smile unless the individual wants to mask or inhibit this display (Ekman et al., 1975). When a smile does occur, the message is usually happiness, although this may be a false message if the sender is masking another emotion with a smile or if the sender is simulating happiness for some other reason.

Cultural and individual differences influence smiling both by determining the interpretation of events, which affects the cause of happiness, and by shaping display rules, which determine when it is socially appropriate to smile. But such differences do not alter people's innate and universal tendency to smile when they are happy (Ekman et al., 1978). It is important to note that although workers in this tradition have emphasized the importance of facial expression in communication and social behavior, they have rarely studied such communication in natural social settings by studying the causes and consequences of smiling; rather, they have focused on the recognition and verbal labeling of emotions in facial expressions, generally in still photographs.

Many nonhuman primates have a submissive facial display, called a grimace, a grin, or a silent bare-teeth face. The display resembles the human smile, and in all species in which it occurs, it seems to have the function of deflecting hostile behavior of more dominant animals (Hooff, 1972). Additionally, he also showed that in addition to averting attacks, variations of this display were used to maintain or increase affiliative behaviors between individuals. Also, he hypothesized that the human smile is evolutionarily related to the chimpanzee's bared-teeth displays and serves the same functions of deflecting hostility and maintaining friendly contact. Laughter evolved independently and is related to the primate "play face." If human smiling is a behavioral homologue of chimpanzee bare-teeth displays, one would expect smiling to occur most in face-to-face interaction, especially where friendly intent is problematic or where social bonds are being established or renewed. The smiler's motivation may be genuine friendliness or an intent to establish friendly relations. Moreover, it increases when they turn to face friends and is greatest when they are engaged in face-to-face interactions in close proximity to them.

The social hypothesis predicts that smiling should occur most during these bouts of more intense social involvement.

Duchenne smiles enable happy people to signal and cooperate with one another, boosting their advantages. In a literature review, it was found out (a) that not all Duchenne smiles are "honest," although producing them in the absence of positive emotion is difficult and often detectable, and (b) that the ability to produce and recognize Duchenne smiles may vary somewhat by a person's cultural origin (Sheldon et al., 2021).

Thus, this study determined the meaning of "smile" to different Filipinos in selected places.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A smile is the most pleasant expression on the face, translating the beauty, youth, and personality of a person.

Chronic positive mood (CPM) has been shown to confer a wide variety of social, functional, and health benefits. Some researchers have argued that humans evolved to feel CPM, which explains why most people report better than neutral mood (the "positivity offset bias") and why particularly happy people have particularly good outcomes. Here, we argue that the Duchenne smile evolved as an honest signal of high levels of CPM, alerting others to the psychological fitness of the smiler. Duchenne smiles are honest because they express felt positive emotions, making it difficult for unhappy people to produce them. Duchenne smiles enable happy people to signal and cooperate with one another, boosting their advantages (Sheldon et al., 2021). Moreover, the common view of emotional expressions is that certain configurations of facial-muscle movements reliably reveal certain categories of emotion. The principal exemplar of this view is the Duchenne smile, a configuration of facial-muscle movements (i.e., smiling with eye constriction) that has been argued to reliably reveal genuine positive emotion (Girard et al., 2021).

Further, social smiles appear to be direct behavioral expressions of positive emotional engagement. This study aims to unleash and identify selected individuals' tendencies to smile and the causes and consequences of smiling. Thus, this study sought to answer the following:

1. What are the reasons for smiling?
2. What motivates Filipinos to smile in social interactions?
3. What attitude is being manifested by the Filipino smile?

Duchenne smiles are named after French anatomist Duchenne du Bologne, who observed that certain smiles involved activation of not only the zygomaticus major muscle (the cheek muscle that pulls up the corners of the mouth) but the orbicularis oculi

muscles as well (the muscles surrounding the eye that raise the cheek and result in the crow's feet wrinkles in the eye region). Non-Duchenne smiles only involve the zygomaticus major muscle and are more easily feigned (Lau, 1982); thus, Duchenne smiles have been considered genuine smiles. Since Duchenne smiles are categorized by a particular pattern of observable muscle activations, they can be defined by the facial action coding system (Ekman et al., 1978) as consisting of both Action Unit (AU) 12 (lips corner pulling in facial action coding terminology) and AU 6 (cheek raising in facial action coding terminology).

The facial expression commonly referred to as "the smile" is in fact not a singular category of facial behavior. Enjoyment smiles were originally called felt smiles, and non-enjoyment smiles were originally called unfelt smiles (Ekman et al., 1975).

## METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive quantitative method and phenomenological qualitative methods. It gathered existing data relative to the concerned interpretation and meaning of the collected point of view of the respondents. A descriptive method was used to describe factors and identify reasons behind respondents' participation. In addition, descriptive quantitative is used to analyze and interpret data collected using an instrument. A three-point Likert scale (Table 1) was used to gather the data. The data was organized, analyzed, and interpreted using the frequency counts, percentages, and weighted mean. Moreover, in gathering the information, focus group discussion (FGD) and interviews were the techniques used by the researchers.

Table 1. Three-point Likert Scale

| Scale | Point Value | Descriptive Equivalent | Descriptions                                  |
|-------|-------------|------------------------|---|
| 3     | 2.34-3.00   | Always                 | Smile is always done in all circumstances.    |
| 2     | 1.67-2.33   | Sometimes              | Smile is sometimes done in all circumstances. |
| 1     | 1.00-1.66   | Never                  | Smile is never done.                          |

A phenomenological qualitative method used stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience-told in story form, and the lived experience of the informants (Merriam, 2002). Mixed methods research is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research together. Also, this approach to research is used when this integration provides a better understanding of the research problem than either of each alone (Cohen et al., 2007). This study took place at Urdaneta City University (UCU), Urdaneta City, Pangasinan, Philippines. As the first community college in the country, UCU (formerly UCC) proved its worth despite its limited resources. Its humble beginning contrasts with its current status as a fast-growing and lone local university in the province of Pangasinan, Philippines. This

gives meaning to both learners and employees as years go by, especially in its leading development among the universities in the province and in the Philippines as well.

The participants of this study were the faculty members, which were composed of a designated faculty, a regular faculty, and part-time faculty members; and students, who were student leaders, regular students, and scholar students. However, this study employed purposive selection. This is a data collection method that involves choosing people or documents from which the researchers can substantially learn about the experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Patton (1990) has said that it is important to select "information-rich cases" for study in depth. They can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

The participants were oriented, and the interview was conducted. A semi-structured interview was formulated from an interview guide using an a priori code so as not to lose track of the proper questions to be asked. The researcher was guided by an Interview Consent Form, an Interview Guide, and an Aide Memoir. These are sample interviews.

1. In what circumstances in your life do you experience love and hate?
2. How did you handle these circumstances in your life?
3. How do these things become your motivation to smile as a Filipino?

## **RESULTS**

Cool and warm analyses of the sharing and descriptions of a selected group of faculty members and students of Urdaneta City University with regard to their personal involvement as Filipinos in our very own country. Their exposure in this study about smiles to the setting, organization, and other key players yielded features that collectively described several reasons why the respondents tend to smile in any circumstance.

### ***Reasons for Smiling***

Table 2 presents the results of respondents' reasons for smiling which were administered to them. There were 10 qualifying statements. On Table 2, the average weighted mean is 2.23, which is also described as "sometimes," meaning that the respondents managed their emotions into smiling regardless of setting, feeling, time, and people. The 10 qualifying statements manifested the practices of the respondents in smiling as an attitude. From these, statement 8 has a 2.67 as the highest weighted mean indicated in the table, which is described as sometimes. This states that the respondents smile even though they have responsibilities in their present roles in their lives. "Smile" is a universal language that the respondents can use to address anybody. Moreover, statements 2, 3 and 9 were given a 2.5 weighted mean with a descriptive equivalent of sometimes. It is deemed that respondents smile even if they have fewer opportunities to buy what they need, are not close to anybody, and don't have enough sleep.

Table 2. Reasons for Smiling

|   | Qualifying Statements  | WM          | DE       |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
|---|--|-------------|----------|------------------------|------------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|----------|-----------|
| 1   | I smile even there are misunderstandings with my...  |             |          |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
|   | Friends  | 2           | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
|   | Family   | 2.17        | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
|   | Peers  | 2           | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 2   | I smile even I don't have money to buy I need.   | 2.5         | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 3   | I smile despite other people don't like me.  | 2.5         | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 4   | I smile even I don't want to work with other persons.  | 2.17        | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 5   | I smile even there are a lot of works.   | 2.17        | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 6   | I smile even my salary/allowance is not enough and/or delayed.   | 2.17        | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 7   | I smile even I am exhausted with my job/school work.   | 2           | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 8   | I smile even I have a lot of works/responsibilities like leader, mother/father, son/daughter, partner, and the like. | 2.67        | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 9   | I smile even I don't have enough sleep.  | 2.5         | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 10  | I smile even I didn't achieve something in a day/week/month.   | 2.33        | S        |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
|   | <b>AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN</b>   | <b>2.23</b> | <b>S</b> |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| Legend:<br><table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Numerical Value</b></td> <td><b>Descriptive Equivalent (DE)</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.34-3.0</td> <td>Always (A)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1.67-2.33</td> <td>Sometimes (S)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1.0-1.66</td> <td>Never (N)</td> </tr> </table> |  |             |          | <b>Numerical Value</b> | <b>Descriptive Equivalent (DE)</b> | 2.34-3.0 | Always (A) | 1.67-2.33 | Sometimes (S) | 1.0-1.66 | Never (N) |
| <b>Numerical Value</b>  | <b>Descriptive Equivalent (DE)</b>   |             |          |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 2.34-3.0  | Always (A)   |             |          |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 1.67-2.33   | Sometimes (S)  |             |          |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |
| 1.0-1.66  | Never (N)  |             |          |                        |                                    |          |            |           |               |          |           |

According to the respondents, they used to have sleepless nights because of the exposure to social media, their role as family members, and related job submissions. This also revealed the sharing of ideas by the respondents among peers in the university. Thus, they still smile even if they are sleepy and financially challenged when they see each other at the university. According to Taki et al. (2017), the interpretation of a smile is indicative of its nature; either pleasure, amusement, or derision. In other words, a smile is a distinguished facial expression marked by an upward curve of the mouth at the corners. It also influences the perceived facial attractiveness of an individual and is used as an effective tool for social interaction. Further, the trust factor is higher for people who smile as compared to non-smiling people.

The positive effect of smiling on interpersonal attraction and perception is well established in the psychosocial literature. A smile leads to a more favorable perception of the target, and this effect was found on multiple personality dimensions. Otta et al. (1993) reported that they found that a smiling person receives more positive scores on the dimensions of leadership, optimism, sincerity, and kindness. This is related to the profession of a teacher; a smile can contaminate learners and can acquire interest so that they will come to your class religiously and with interest. As such studies have proven, Tidd et al. (1978) report that patrons in a bar give significantly larger tips to a waitress who approaches them with a broad smile than to one with a minimal smile. In a similar vein, Solomon et al. (1981), also reported that a smiling confederate in a large department store receives more help than a non-smiling one.

## DISCUSSION

### *Motivations of Filipinos in Smiling*

This section presents the motivations of the respondents in smiling. God's Creation, Attract People, Professional Aspect, and Inspire Others are the results of motivation from the interview in this study.

**God's creation.** This phrase signifies an impact on the respondents because, at their age, they appreciated the environment, friends, and their loving family. As supported by the respondents, they wanted to smile. The sunset and the sunrise, the trees and flowers, supportive friends and loving family that surround them, which are God's creations. According to Messinger and Fogel (2007), smiles index a related family of positive emotions or a single emotion of joy that develops within real-time interactions between infants and social partners. Moreover, the role of emotions such as joy in the creation and maintenance of relationships with the environment, particularly with significant others (Harris et al., 2005), Thus, a smile is an emotional signal to the self as well as the interactive partner. They are simultaneously experiential and social.

**Attract people.** This is an experience of respondents A, B and C. They wanted to have a better outcome of their actions that a smile can create relationship to each and among individuals. This changes also their mood as they mingle to every individual or group. Respondent A said that smile is very contagious, by simply wearing my smile, it attracts people to smile at me too. Also, respondent B said that the outcome of my actions through smile makes me forget my frustrations especially when I am with other people. Respondent C added that he easily smile in front of other people. Smiling actions can reflect different positive emotions depending upon co-occurring actions and the dynamics of the social process (Messinger, et al., 2007). In the study of Frank et al. (1993), women were seen as more positive when they showed enjoyment compared with non-enjoyment smiles. These results provide further evidence that enjoyment smiles are entities distinct from smiles in general.

**Professional Aspects.** This is considered in the interview of the teacher respondents. They are concerned about their surroundings, where they meet students and co-employees from the university. They stressed that they consider being professional whenever situations call for them to smile, especially when dealing with people who may be a possible cause of tension or stress. It is tried to establish that social involvement is a major cause of smiling and that happiness does not seem to be a necessary mediator. Why do people smile in the presence of others? Drawing on comparisons of humans with other primates, Hooff (1972) argues that most human smiling is affiliative, used in the expression of sympathy, reassurance, or appeasement; that is, that the smiler's motivation is to insure the establishment and maintenance of friendly interaction.

**Inspire Others.** This exists for all the respondents where they are after the welfare of their peers, family and learners. Respondent A believes that smiling can inspire other people. That is his mindset despite different problems. Respondent B also manages to smile in front of them by temporarily recalling positive moments in order to smile in front of them while communicating in them. In support of this idea, respondent C said that smiling eases feelings. This lessens the tension and makes situations easier to deal with. Chow et al. (2005) stated that qualitatively discrete positive emotional "attractors"—such as a particular type of smile in a particular interactive moment—may self-organize in response to underlying continuous processes. Also, smiles may function both as discrete indices of specific states of engagement and as flowing indices of positive engagement. At this juncture, it may be productive to adopt the view of social smiling most conducive to a specific phenomenon or research question while remaining open to the complementary perspective. Vocalizations, for example, tend to be embedded in the course of a smile such that the smile is punctuated by the vocalization (Scanlon et al., 2011).

### ***A Filipino Attitude in Smiling***

A smile gives a conventional meaning to people but an ambiguous meaning to the sender. A smile has various meanings. Filipinos were considered as hospitable individuals wherever they were. From the interview conducted, the researcher came up with three themes that describe the attitude of Filipinos through smiling. These are optimistic, appreciative, and sympathizers.

**Optimistic.** Filipinos are positive thinkers who show a positive outlook. A smile makes them look positive and think positively as well. It is indicated from the different interviews conducted with the respondents. These are some of their statements.

- (1) *"... there is always sunshine after a heavy rain and... be a light to yourself and to others."*
- (2) *"Tomorrow is another day, another adventure, another life. If you failed today, tomorrow will be a better one."*
- (3) *"I thought of positive moments that made me smile always."*
- (4) *"...wearing my sweet smile, I could attract people to smile. This would affect the ambiance and the surroundings to the people around you."*
- (5) *"When you are smiling you are inviting people to possess positivity. You share and spread more smiles."*

As Messinger and Fogel (2007) stated, early social smiles appear to be direct behavioral expressions of positive emotional engagement. A dynamic systems approach focuses on social smiling as a reflection and constituent of an interactive relationship.

**Appreciative.** Most of the respondents stated that a smile provides confidence for an individual. An appreciation is a fair valuation or estimate of merit, recognizing his or her performance in a certain field. This demonstrates how effective people's smiles are.

- (1) *"God's creation... I wanted to smile. The sunset and the sunrise, the trees and flowers, my supportive friends and my loving family that surround me. Simply looking and smiling, it calms my heart."*
- (2) *"It is easy to smile at other people, especially when you see them smiling back at you."*
- (3) *"Smile helps me be at ease. Smiling makes or keeps me sane amidst the household chores and school work."*

Scanlon et al. (2011) demonstrated that including Duchenne smiles in mock print advertisements affects viewers' perceptions of the ad and featured product, resulting in more positive evaluations as compared to neutral and non-Duchenne advertisements. These attract people to appreciate the things around you.

**Sympathizer.** This simply shows the compassion, concern, and empathy of every individual towards other people. An individual has a positive outlook and confidence that can generate a genuine smile among people around them. These are sample statements from the respondents.

- (1) *"I manage to smile in front of the people around me by simply imagining myself in their shoes."*
- (2) *"I believe everyone has their own problems and the art of smiling will help them alleviate their feelings towards other people."*
- (3) *"I believe that smiling can encourage other people and inspire them to smile as well. That is my mindset despite the different problems we encounter in our lives."*
- (4) *"Despite the many calamities experienced in the Philippines, we keep on smiling!"*
- (5) *A smile is our greatest armor to defeat trials and struggles in life. This is seen by all Filipinos; despite the problems we experience. We manage to smile at others.*

According to the emotional expression view, a smile is the major component of a facial display associated with and caused by feelings of happiness or joy. Anything that makes a person feel good or happy should produce a smile unless the individual wants to mask or inhibit this display (Ekman et al., 1993).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This concludes that cultural, social, and individual differences influence others by smiling. A smile also influences how people interpret events that make them happy. Also, it shapes the ambiance in different roles that define social interaction whenever they smile. Differences among the respondents do not alter people's innate and universal

tendency to smile when they are happy. Thus, this study recommends creating activities to practice smiling in different situations in life.

## IMPLICATIONS

A smile tends to contaminate more positive energy. Positive emotions and expressions in Filipino attitudes toward various situations Filipinos are extremely optimistic about all life experiences, whether positive or negative. Smile also has a conventional meaning, which Filipinos tend to smile at, even when they are feeling ambiguous. Also, a smile provides various meanings, and this study gave different ways and reasons for smiling. Thus, Filipinos were considered hospitable individuals wherever they were.

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