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Research Article

Coffee Culture and Mental Health: A Qualitative Exploration of Perceptions and Experiences of Coffee Enthusiast

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Article Info

A b s t r a c t

Coffee has become a part of daily life, offering comfort, connection, and structure through shared rituals and routines. Exploring the experiences and perceptions of coffee enthusiasts displays its deeper cultural and personal significance beyond being just a drink. Through a phenomenological approach, the research gathered insights from ten coffee enthusiasts in Malaybalay City, concentrating on their lived experiences and interactions with coffee culture. By carefully selecting participants who met specific criteria, the study provided a detailed and authentic account of their engagement with coffee. The findings highlight coffee as an integral part of participants' strategies for managing stress, maintaining emotional balance, and enhancing social bonds. Key patterns identified include the beverage's ability to provide a structured break, enhance focus, and create a sense of normalcy through routine, offering emotional stability and practical coping mechanisms. This dynamic relationship underscores coffee's practical and symbolic importance in fostering emotional resilience and interpersonal connection. Coffee serves as a multifaceted tool for mental health, offering emotional resilience, stress relief, and strengthened social connections through its rituals and cultural significance.

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Coffee culture has emerged as a global phenomenon, deeply woven into the fabric of modern life (Azahra et al., 2024). Beyond its role as a simple beverage, coffee has become a symbol of community, creativity, and comfort (Candraningrum, 2019; Chang & McGonigle, 2020). The rituals associated with coffee—whether savoring a morning cup, gathering at cafés, or exploring artisanal brewing methods—have cultivated spaces for social connection and personal reflection (Ferreira et al., 2021). In contemporary society, coffee has transcended its functional purpose, shaping lifestyles, fostering relationships, and becoming a cornerstone of daily routines. This cultural significance highlights the multifaceted ways coffee impacts lives in the modern era (Chen et al., 2021).

While coffee culture is celebrated as a significant part of social and personal routines (Wang et al., 2019), its connection to mental health remains unexamined. Much of the discussion surrounding coffee focuses on its social popularity or physiological effects, leaving a gap in understanding how it functions as a coping mechanism. Questions about how coffee rituals create a sense of belonging, structure daily lives, or provide comfort during stressful times are often overlooked. This lack of exploration leaves a gap in how such a prevalent cultural practice impacts mental health, particularly in modern social dynamics where connection and routine are critical to well-being (Ng et al., 2021). While existing studies focus on coffee's physiological effects, its role in mental health within the Philippine sociocultural context remains underexplored.

This study aligns with the provisions of RA 11036, or the Philippine Mental Health Act, which emphasizes promoting mental health and well-being through community-based initiatives and preventive strategies (Mental Health Act, 2018). As a shared social practice, coffee culture offers unique opportunities to foster mental wellness by facilitating social interaction and creating comforting routines. By examining coffee culture through the lens of mental health advocacy, this study explores the broader efforts to understand and enhance mental health within the frameworks outlined by national policy.

This research investigates individuals' perceptions and experiences regarding coffee culture and its relationship to mental health. Specifically, it explores how participants define and engage with coffee culture while examining their perspectives on its impact on emotional well-being.

Theoretical Framework

The study anchors on Symbolic Interactionism, Cultural Capital Theory, and Stress and Coping Theory. Symbolic Interactionism (Meltzer et al., 2020) provides a foundation for understanding how individuals attribute meaning to their participation in coffee culture. As both a commodity and a ritual, coffee is filled with symbolic significance that varies across social contexts. Through this lens, the study explores how individuals define their engagement with coffee culture, the meanings they ascribe to its rituals, and how they influence their well-being perceptions (Ridaryanthi et al., 2022).

Cultural Capital Theory (Huang, 2019) extends this understanding by examining how participation in coffee culture reflects and reinforces social positioning. Access to specialized knowledge about coffee, preferences for certain brewing methods, or frequenting

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specific coffee spaces often signal cultural capital, influencing an individual's sense of identity and belonging. By investigating how cultural capital operates within coffee culture, the study displays its role and impact on emotional and social well-being (Candraningrum, 2019).

Stress and Coping Theory (Biggs et al., 2017) anchors the study's exploration of coffee culture as a potential coping mechanism. The theory highlights how individuals manage stressors through adaptive behaviors and practices, emphasizing the importance of rituals and routines in maintaining emotional balance. The comforting rituals of coffee preparation and consumption provide solace and structure, which may serve as vital tools for coping with everyday stressors and maintaining mental health (Ferreira et al., 2021).

Concurrently, these theories offer a cohesive framework for exploring the dynamics of coffee culture and its relationship with mental health. Symbolic Interactionism underscores coffee practices' personal and shared meanings, while Cultural Capital Theory situates these practices within broader social hierarchies. Stress and Coping Theory complements these perspectives by focusing on the functional aspects of these rituals in managing emotional challenges. Interwoven, these theories highlight the interplay between individual experiences, social constructs, and psychological resilience, providing an approach to examining the multifaceted nature of coffee culture.

Statement of the Problem

The study seeks to explore individuals' perceptions and lived experiences regarding how their engagement with coffee culture intersects with their mental health. It aims to provide a deeper understanding of coffee culture's role in influencing and shaping mental health experiences. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do participants perceive and define coffee culture?
2. What are participants' perceptions of the relationship between coffee culture and mental health?

Materials and Methods

Research Design and Sampling Method

The study utilized a phenomenological research approach (Errasti‑Ibarrondo et al., 2018) to explore coffee enthusiasts' lived experiences and perceptions. This approach allowed for an exploration of participants' interactions with coffee culture, focusing on their individual and shared meanings. The research was conducted within six (6) known coffee shops in the Población area of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. This locale was chosen as it serves as a hub for coffee enthusiasts in the city, fostering a vibrant community of individuals who actively engage with coffee culture. The setting provided a conducive environment for gathering diverse insights and perspectives from regular patrons of these establishments.

The study, as presented in Table 1, included ten (10) participants, six (6) males and four (4) females, aged between nineteen (19) and forty-seven (47). Among them were three (3) students and seven (7) professionals, representing a range of demographics that reflect the diversity of coffee enthusiasts in the locale.

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Table 1. Participants sociodemographic profile

Name	Age	Sex	Civil Status	Occupation	Coffee Consumption	Coffee History
CD-1	34	Male	Single	Instructor	≈ 2 cups / Day	10 years
CD-2	19	Male	Single	Student	≈ 2 cups / Day	2 years
CD-3	23	Female	Single	Office Staff	≈ 4 cups / Week	5 years
CD-4	20	Male	Single	Student	≈ 3 cups / Day	2 years
CD-5	47	Female	Married	Professor	≈ 1 cup / Day	29 years
CD-6	27	Male	Married	Accountant	≈ 3 cups / Day	8 years
CD-7	26	Female	Single	Nurse	≈ 2 cups / Day	8 years
CD-8	42	Female	Married	Manager	≈ 1 cup / Day	23 years
CD-9	22	Male	Single	Seminarian	≈ 2 cups / Day	5 years
CD-10	23	Male	Single	Barista	≈ 4 cups / Day	6 years

Note: (≈) – on average

These participants were selected for their firsthand experiences with coffee culture, offering valuable perspectives on its personal and social significance. Criterion sampling (Padilla-Díaz, 2015) was employed to select participants with relevant experiences and knowledge. The criteria required participants to consume at least one (1) cup of coffee daily, be regular patrons of coffee shops in Malaybalay City, have been avid coffee drinkers for at least two (2) years, and demonstrate some understanding of coffee culture. This method ensured the participants were familiar with the topic, enabling meaningful and focused data collection.

Research Procedures

The study utilized a researcher-developed instrument designed to gather insights into the perceptions and experiences of participants. To ensure its validity and relevance, the instrument was reviewed and validated by three (3) experts in the field of mental health. Ethical protocols were strictly adhered to throughout the data collection process. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study and signed informed consent forms, ensuring their voluntary participation. Measures to uphold anonymity and confidentiality were implemented, and participants agreed to be contacted for clarification of their responses if needed.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews (Magaldi & Berler, 2020), which provided flexibility to explore participants' unique experiences while maintaining a focused discussion. Each interview lasted between twenty (20) to forty (40) minutes and was recorded with the participant's consent. The interviews were scheduled during mid-morning and mid-afternoon, avoiding peak hours in coffee shops to ensure a quiet and conducive environment for meaningful conversation. This approach allowed for an atmosphere where participants felt at ease, promoting richer and more reflective responses.

To ensure the reliability and depth of the data, the study implemented data saturation (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017) as a guiding principle. Initially, thirteen (13) participants were recruited; however, three (3) withdrew, resulting in ten (10) final participants. Despite this, the study achieved saturation, with the data collected being comprehensive and sufficient to address the research objectives.

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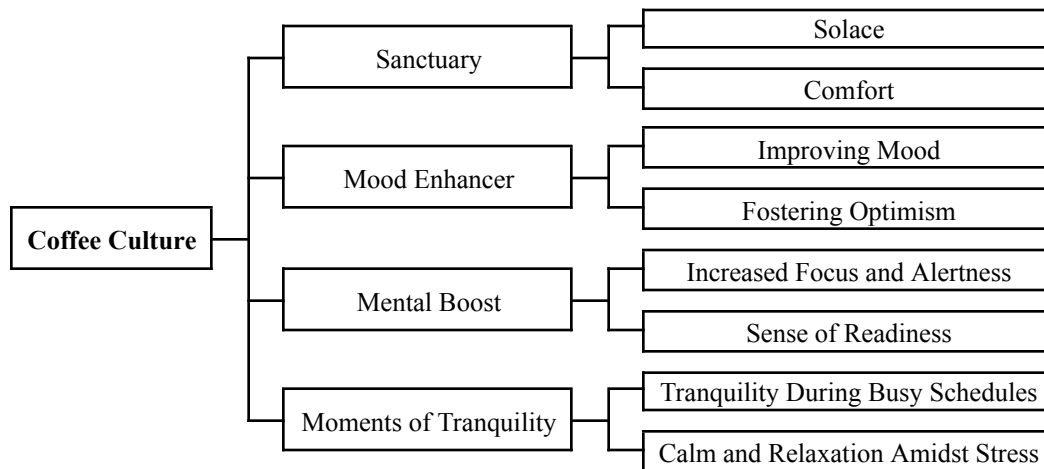[*]Corresponding Email: etajaon@gmail.com

Data Analysis

The analysis began with transcribing the recorded interviews, ensuring every detail was accurately documented. The data was then coded and segmented into coherent narratives to highlight patterns and themes. Narrative analysis (Herman & Vervaeck, 2019) examined individual accounts, focusing on how participants described their interactions with coffee culture. The approach emphasized the sequence and structure of their stories, highlighting the meaning they attached to specific experiences and interactions. In parallel, thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017) was used to identify patterns and commonalities across the participants' narratives. This involved systematically organizing the data into themes that reflected shared perceptions and experiences. Thematic analysis complemented the narrative approach by providing a broader understanding of the participants' collective insights.

Immersion in the data spanned two (2) months, allowing the researchers to engage deeply with the material and identify recurring ideas and unique perspectives. To enhance credibility, the study implemented member checking (Candela, 2019), where participants, regular coffee shop patrons, reviewed the initial findings to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of their narratives. Based on their feedback, follow-up immersion sessions were conducted over three (3) weeks to refine and finalize the results. This iterative process ensured the analysis was thorough and participant-centered, producing findings that genuinely reflected the participants' lived experiences.

Results and Discussions

Figure 1. Overview of the thematic chart with the participants' definition regarding 'coffee' in coffee culture.

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Coffee Culture

Figure 1 illustrates the thematic analysis chart connected the participants' definition regarding 'coffee' in coffee culture. The analysis generated four (4) primary themes, namely: *sanctuary*, *mood enhancer*, *mental boost*, and *moments of* *tranquility*. Withing each thematic category, subthemes have been recorded and analyzed, observing the participants' definition regarding 'coffee' in coffee culture.

Sanctuary

Coffee culture provides a unique sense of refuge, where the act of consuming coffee transcends its physical function and becomes a source of emotional and psychological solace. This theme explores how coffee-related practices create spaces and moments that feel safe, comforting, and deeply personal, offering individuals an escape from the demands of daily life.

Solace

The idea of finding solace in coffee emerges as a significant aspect of its cultural perception. As shared by a participant:

> *"...the aroma and taste provide a sense of comfort and relaxation."* (CD-8)

The experience of comfort and relaxation provided by the aroma and taste of coffee reflects the symbolic value participants attach to the beverage (Maspul, 2024b). It represents a ritualistic pause in their day, a sensory experience that fosters emotional ease. This perception is shaped by individual meanings and reinforced by societal norms that elevate coffee as a comforting staple (Özkök & Erbay, 2022; Maspul, 2023b). The ability of coffee to evoke such feelings positions it as a resource for coping, allowing individuals to navigate stress while cultivating a personal connection to their routine (Hernández & Alvarez, 2024). This underscores its role in creating a mental and emotional haven within the broader framework of coffee culture.

Comfort and Calm

The association of coffee with comfort and calmness highlights its dual function as a cultural object and a personal tool for emotional well-being. As stated by the participants:

> *"...a cup of coffee can provide a sense of comfort..."* (CD-1)

> *"...It [coffee] also gives me a moment of calm and comfort especially during stressful days..."* (CD-7)

For many, the act of drinking coffee transcends physical provisions, symbolizing moments of peace amidst the demands of daily life (Samoggia et al., 2020). Its value in social contexts enriches these interpretations, where coffee is celebrated as a symbol of refinement and familiarity (Luu & Westh, 2023). Moreover, coffee's calming presence during stressful periods aligns with its capacity to act as a mental buffer, offering individuals a structured, predictable means to cope with emotional challenges (Sudarman, 2023; Maspul, 2024b).

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This perception aligns with a deeper cultural understanding of coffee as a trusted companion in ordinary and challenging moments

Through its multifaceted appeal, coffee is perceived as a sanctuary that supports mental well-being and fosters personal and collective identity. Its role extends beyond the beverage itself, encompassing the rituals, environments, and social practices associated with its consumption. This interpretation of coffee culture reveals a complex interplay between individual experiences and societal values, where coffee is a practical and symbolic resource. The subthemes illustrate the insightful ways coffee enthusiasts define and engage with their shared culture.

Mood Enhancer

The role of coffee in uplifting emotional states highlights its capacity to act as a reliable and accessible tool for enhancing mood. This section delves into the ways participants associate coffee with moments of joy, relaxation, and emotional balance, illustrating its impact on their overall mental well-being.

Lifting Mood

Coffee's ability to uplift moods during moments of fatigue or emotional strain underscores its significant role in shaping daily experiences. As shared by the participants:

> *"...there have been times when coffee really helped lift my mood especially when I'm feeling tired or overwhelmed..."* (CD-4)

> *"...there are days when I feel sluggish or a bit down and a good cup of coffee lifts my spirits and energizes me..."* (CD-10)

The perception of coffee as a mood lifter is deeply symbolic, reflecting its association with energy, vitality, and positivity (Colonna, 2021). This interpretation arises from personal experiences and societal narratives that celebrate coffee as a source of renewal (Maspul, 2023a; Hernández & Alvarez, 2024). By providing a sense of rejuvenation, coffee becomes a practical tool for individuals to cope with stress and low energy while simultaneously embedding itself as a meaningful ritual in their routines (Kišjuhas, 2024; Maspul, 2024b). This duality enhances its value within cultural and emotional contexts.

Fostering Optimism

The optimism coffee fosters during challenging periods highlights its function as a psychological support (Hernández & Alvarez, 2024). As specified by a participant:

> *"...coffee has also lifted my spirits during particularly stressful periods..."* (CD-5)

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For many, the act of savoring coffee creates a temporary escape from stress, allowing space for reflection and emotional recalibration (Bhumiratana et al., 2019). This symbolic act carries deeper social meanings, as coffee is often regarded as a refined and commonly appreciated commodity (Ridaryanthi et al., 2022). Its capacity to foster optimism is also tied to its role as a shared cultural resource, providing individuals with a sense of belonging and a comforting connection to broader societal practices (Ferreira et al., 2021). These attributes solidify coffee's position as a personal and shared mechanism for navigating emotional challenges.

The interplay of coffee's mood-enhancing qualities reflects its broader cultural significance as a source of emotional and social fulfillment. Its presence in daily life is not merely functional but deeply intertwined with individual well-being and identity. Coffee's capacity to lift spirits and foster optimism demonstrates how personal experiences are shaped by societal values, creating a shared understanding of its role as a cultural cornerstone. This perception enhances its relevance as a sanctuary for well-being, enriching the definition of coffee culture through its profound connection to human resilience and positivity.

Mental Boost

Beyond its physical effects, coffee is deeply tied to participants' perceptions of heightened mental acuity and preparedness. This theme examines how coffee consumption is intertwined with improved focus, alertness, and cognitive clarity, which empower individuals to manage their daily tasks and responsibilities more effectively.

Increased Focus and Alertness

Coffee's association with increased focus and alertness reflects its integral role in cognitive and task-related enhancement. As specified by the participants:

> "...it's like a small boost that helps me feel more focused and ready to tackle my studies..." (CD-2)

> "...it [coffee] gives me a quick boost and helps me focus better..." (CD-3)

> "...there have been numerous times when a cup of coffee has helped me feel more alert and focused..." (CD-5)

Through the lens of daily experiences, coffee emerges as more than a beverage; it becomes a tool for sharpening mental acuity and sustaining productivity (Kim et al., 2021; Acosta et al., 2024). This phenomenon is shaped by the shared understanding of coffee as a symbol of preparedness and competence, reinforcing its cultural significance (Pegado et al., 2022; Maspul, 2023b). For many individuals, the act of consuming coffee is imbued with meaning, signifying a deliberate step toward readiness for intellectual and practical demands (Samoggia et al., 2020; Calvo et al., 2021). This interplay between personal utility and cultural identity underscores coffee's broader role in mental and social life.

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Sense of Readiness

The sense of readiness that coffee cultivates further illustrates its psychological and motivational impact. As shared by the participants:

> *"...coffee gives me the mental edge to conquer my to-do list…"* (CD-1)

> *"...coffee gives me a sense of readiness…."* (CD-6)

Beyond the physiological effects of caffeine, the ritual of coffee consumption creates a mental framework of preparedness and capability (Samoggia et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021). This sense of readiness is amplified by its cultural capital, as coffee consumption is often associated with modern productivity and an aspirational lifestyle (Chen et al., 2021). By engaging in this practice, individuals experience personal benefits and align themselves with broader societal values of diligence and efficiency (Wang et al., 2019). Coffee, accordingly, serves as both a personal catalyst and a social marker, bridging the gap between individual drive and cultural expectations

The broader impact of coffee as a mental booster highlights its centrality in shaping perceptions of productivity and preparedness. This role is rooted in its dual capacity to provide immediate cognitive benefits and foster a sense of belonging. As individuals navigate their routines and responsibilities, coffee serves as a companion in their efforts to maintain focus and accomplish goals. This dynamic interplay between personal efficacy and cultural symbolism deepens the understanding of coffee culture as a complex and meaningful part of contemporary life, emphasizing its relevance in mental resilience and task management.

Moments of Tranquility

Coffee culture offers more than stimulation; it also facilitates quiet moments of relaxation and reflection. This theme investigates how participants use coffee to pause their day, fostering mental calmness and an opportunity to recharge amidst life's busyness.

Tranquility During Busy Schedules

Coffee's role in creating moments of tranquility amidst busy schedules highlights its capacity to offer a brief reprieve from the demands of daily life. As indicated by a participant:

> *"...coffee has helped me feel more focused and calmer* [*sic*]*. It provides a moment of tranquility amidst a busy schedule…."* (CD-9)

This experience emphasizes coffee as a practical tool for fostering focus while promoting calmness (Maspul, 2024b). Participants often frame their coffee rituals as a deliberate act of pausing, transforming their consumption into a mindful practice that balances productivity with well-being (Maspul, 2023b; Kišjuhas, 2024). Through these experiences, coffee becomes a mechanism for navigating the difficulties of fast-paced routines, seamlessly integrating relaxation into a structured day (Ferreira et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2021).

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Calm and Relaxation Amidst Stress

The calming and relaxing effect of coffee amidst stress further illustrates its role as a coping mechanism, providing physical and sensory comfort that alleviates tension. As shared by the participants:

> "...there have been times when coffee has helped me feel less fatigued during long shifts…"
> (CD-7)

> "...the aroma and flavor create a sense of peace and ease…" (CD-8)

The aroma, flavor, and ritualistic nature of coffee drinking serve as soothing elements that create a momentary sense of ease (Chang & McGonigle, 2020; Maspul, 2024b). These attributes mitigate fatigue and mental strain and offer emotional stability during high-pressure periods (Ferreira et al., 2021; Sudarman, 2023). Coffee's ability to facilitate both relaxation and endurance situates it as an integral part of participants' strategies for maintaining equilibrium in stressful environments (Hernández & Alvarez, 2024; Kišjuhas, 2024).

The overarching connection between tranquility and coffee consumption reflects its dual function as a stimulant and a source of psychological solace. These experiences collectively redefine coffee as more than a functional beverage; it becomes a means of achieving balance and emotional regulation within the context of modern life. By offering moments of stillness and clarity, coffee provides a powerful tool for harmonizing the demands of daily responsibilities with personal well-being, emphasizing its relevance to individuals' broader coping strategies.

Coffee emerges as a multifaceted element in participants' lives, offering a sense of refuge, emotional upliftment, cognitive enhancement, and moments of calm. The practice of consuming coffee is deeply personal yet socially resonant, reflecting how individuals interpret and engage with its sensory and ritualistic aspects to navigate their mental and emotional states. Coffee serves as a comforting retreat that aligns with daily routines, a subtle but effective instrument for improving mood and focus, and a deliberate act of self-care amidst life's demands. Through the shared meanings participants assign to their experiences, coffee drinking exceeds its functional purpose, becoming a structured mechanism for coping with stress and enhancing daily living.

Coffee Culture and Mental Health

Figure 2 illustrates the thematic analysis chart connective the participants perception of coffee culture towards mental health. The analysis generated four (4) primary themes, namely: *coping mechanism for stress and anxiety*, *comfort and normalcy*, *coffee culture and social interaction*, and *coffee as a structured break*. Within each thematic category, subthemes have been recorded and analyzed, observing the participants' conceptions of coffee within its cultural context.

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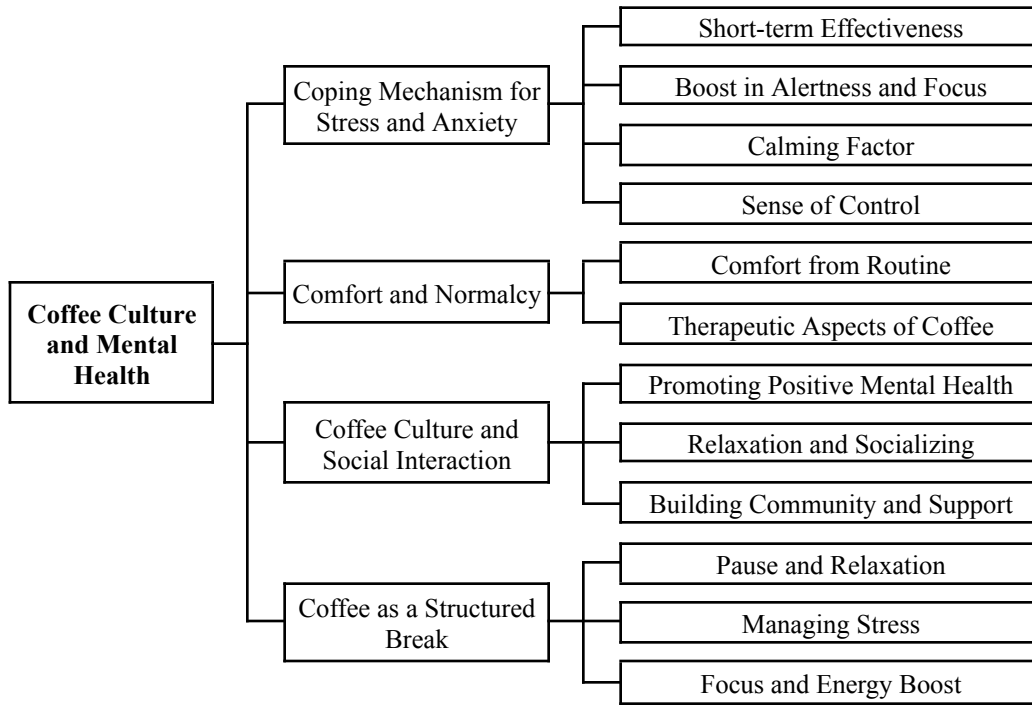
Figure 2. Overview of the thematic chart of the participants perception of coffee culture towards mental health.

Coping Mechanism for Stress and Anxiety

Coffee plays a significant role in helping individuals manage the pressures and uncertainties of daily life. This theme explores how participants use coffee-related rituals and experiences to alleviate stress and navigate challenging emotional states. This demonstrates its utility as a coping tool in their mental health strategies.

Short-term Effectiveness

The practice of consuming coffee serves as an available short-term means for managing stress, particularly during demanding moments. As detailed by the participants:

> *"…it's quite effective in the short term…the ritual of making and drinking coffee is calming…"*
> (CD-1)

> *"…I do use coffee to help manage stress particularly during busy workdays…I find it highly effective for short-term concentration and energy levels…"* (CD-3)

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Coffee offers participants a temporary sense of relief and effectiveness in coping with immediate challenges (Šabić & Mujanović, 2020; Maspul, 2023b). Coffee's utility lies in both its physiological effects, such as enhancing alertness and concentration (Maspul, 2024a), and its role as a structured activity that creates brief moments of calm amidst busyness (Maspul, 2024b). The result highlights how coffee consumption aligns with participants' need for short-term solutions to alleviate stress and regain focus (Smith, 2020).

Boost in Alertness and Focus

The act of drinking coffee is perceived as a practical means to address mental fatigue and stress-induced anxiety by providing a cognitive boost. As shared by the participants:

> "...I do use coffee to cope with stress especially when I have a lot of assignments due...It's pretty effective because it gives me a mental boost that I need..." (CD-2)

> "...coffee is quite effective in making me feel more alert and less anxious at least temporarily..." (CD-4)

Participants associate the beverage with a sense of preparedness and mental sharpness, viewing it as an essential mechanism to initiate or maintain focus during demanding tasks or high-stress situations (Pegado et al., 2022; Maspul, 2023b). Consuming coffee is often tied to rituals that mentally prepare individuals for productivity, creating a cognitive and emotional readiness to face challenges (Ferreira et al., 2021). This association highlights coffee's immediate capacity to enhance focus and alertness, which is particularly significant in conditions that demand sustained mental effort. By facilitating clarity and energy, coffee helps individuals manage overwhelming workloads effectively, temporarily relieving stress and anxiety while maintaining optimal performance (Chen et al., 2021; Acosta et al., 2024).

Calming Factor

The ritual of preparing and consuming coffee introduces an element of calm into participants' routines. As shared by the participants:

> "...coffee acts as a bit of a ritual for me providing comfort and a sense of normalcy...It's quite effective in helping me manage stress as the act of making and drinking coffee is a small enjoyable break in a busy day..." (CD-5)

> "...I find the coffee-making ritual an effective way to manage my anxiety..." (CD-6)

The deliberate process of making and drinking coffee provides participants with a comforting ritual, allowing them to temporarily step away from stressors and regain a sense of calm (Maspul, 2023b; Maspul, 2024b). The repetitive nature of this activity creates a familiar rhythm that helps anchor their day, offering a sense of stability amidst challenges. Participants find mental comfort in this routine, as it fosters feelings of control over their environment and daily experiences (Candraningrum, 2019). The enjoyable aspects of this process, from preparation to consumption, further enhance its soothing effect, making it a reliable way to manage stress. Typically, this simple yet

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intentional practice reinforces their feelings of ease and normalcy (Qureshi et al., 2022).

Sense of Control

Through its consistent inclusion in daily routines, coffee also provides a sense of structure, fostering feelings of control and stability during periods of stress. As specified by the participants:

> *"...the caffeine provides a boost that helps me feel more in control and less overwhelmed..."* (CD-1)

> *"...it gives me a structured break and a moment to breathe which helps reduce my stress levels..."* (CD-9)

Incorporating coffee into their daily routines provides participants with a structured opportunity to pause and recenter, effectively relieving the sense of being overwhelmed by their responsibilities (Bhumiratana et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2021; Maspul, 2023b). This intentional break fosters clarity and calm, allowing them to reset their mental state before resuming tasks. Choosing to take this break instills a perception of control and autonomy over their time, reinforcing its effectiveness as a coping mechanism. By framing coffee consumption as a deliberate strategy, participants highlight its role in mitigating mental and emotional strain (Ferreira et al., 2021).

Collectively, the insights reveal how coffee consumption is viewed as a versatile coping mechanism that addresses both physical and psychological dimensions of stress and anxiety. It provides participants reliable short-term relief, cognitive support, and emotional regulation. These findings emphasize its importance as a self-directed strategy for maintaining well-being during heightened stress, contributing to a broader understanding of how participants perceive its relationship with mental health.

Comfort and Normalcy

Amidst the chaos of modern life, coffee provides a grounding force that fosters familiarity and reassurance. This theme examines how participants find solace in the rituals and routines surrounding coffee consumption, reinforcing a sense of stability and ease in their daily lives.

Comfort from Routine

Incorporating coffee into daily routines is perceived as a stabilizing practice that offers participants a sense of grounding amidst the challenges of a demanding lifestyle. As shared by the participants:

> *"...it also provides a comforting routine that can be very grounding..."* (CD-6)

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"...because the ritual of drinking coffee provides a small but significant break from the stress of work..." (CD-7)

The regularity of this activity provides more than just a momentary reprieve; it creates a predictable and comforting structure that helps individuals navigate their day with greater ease (Samoggia et al., 2020; Pegado et al., 2022).

This small but consistent habit acts as a mental anchor, contributing to emotional stability and a sense of order in otherwise chaotic circumstances (Candraningrum, 2019; Ferreira et al., 2021).

Therapeutic Aspects of Coffee

Beyond its functional benefits, the ritualistic aspects of coffee-making and consumption are described as therapeutic experiences that extend well beyond the physical act. As shared by the participants:

"...the ritual of making and drinking coffee is calming..." (CD-1)

"... the act of making and enjoying coffee is therapeutic for me..." (CD-10)

Participants find solace in the sensory and repetitive nature of the process, which fosters relaxation and mindfulness (Hernández & Alvarez, 2024; Maspul, 2024b). This deliberate focus on the present moment allows individuals to temporarily disengage from stressors,

reinforcing feelings of calm and emotional equilibrium (Ferreira et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2021). Engaging with coffee in this way highlights its role as a personalized coping mechanism that nurtures mental well-being (Chang & McGonigle, 2020; Kišjuhas, 2024).

Concurrently, these practices illustrate how coffee consumption serves as both a comfort and a therapeutic outlet. Its dual role as a grounding routine and a calming ritual emphasizes its importance in managing stress and preserving

mental balance. Participants view these interactions with coffee as essential components of their strategies for maintaining a sense of normalcy and resilience.

Coffee Culture and Social Interaction

Beyond its benefits, coffee serves as a bridge for human connection and shared experiences. This theme delves into the social dimensions of coffee culture, highlighting how it fosters

meaningful interactions, strengthens relationships, and nurtures a sense of community.

Promoting Positive Mental Health

Social gatherings centered around coffee provide a meaningful relaxation avenue and foster positive mental health. As described by the participants:

"...the social aspect of meeting friends at a coffee shop with colleagues over a cup of coffee can be very beneficial...it provides an opportunity for relaxation and social interaction..." (CD-1)

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"...meeting friends at a coffee shop and just taking a break with a cup of coffee can improve your mood and reduce stress..." (CD-3)

Participants shared these interactions as moments of reprieve, where the shared experience of coffee consumption serves as a backdrop for meaningful connections and mutual support (Ferreira et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2022; Maspul, 2023b). Combining a casual environment and the comforting nature of coffee encourages open communication, facilitating emotional relief and strengthening interpersonal bonds (Ridaryanthi et al., 2022; Ni & Ishii, 2023). These social moments, enriched by the communal appreciation for coffee, create a supportive space where stress eases and enhances mood (Hernández & Alvarez, 2024).

Relaxation and Socializing

The practice of unwinding with coffee in solitude or with others contributes to its perceived value for mental well-being. As shared by the participants:

"...meeting friends at a coffee shop or just taking a break with a cup of coffee can be really relaxing and help improve your mood. It's a nice way to socialize and unwind." (CD-2)

"...coffee culture creates opportunities for social interactions and relaxation...just sitting in a coffee shop even alone can be very calming and can help improve my mood..." (CD-4)

Participants emphasized the calming effect of simply sitting in a coffee shop or sharing a cup with friends (Ni & Ishii, 2023). These settings, defined by their informal and welcoming ambiance, help individuals detach from their daily stresses and recharge emotionally (Luu & Westh, 2023; Maspul, 2024b). Socializing over coffee becomes a therapeutic activity, blending relaxation with reinforcing social connections, thus promoting a balanced mental state (Hernández & Alvarez, 2024).

Building Community and Support

In addition to fostering individual relaxation, coffee-centered interactions contribute to a sense of belonging. As shared by the participants:

"...coffee culture encourages socializing and building community which are important for mental health..." (CD-6)

"...sharing a coffee break with fellow seminarians often leads to meaningful conversations and support." (CD-9)

"...being part of a community where people share their love for coffee creates a sense of belonging and support..." (CD-10)

Engaging with others over shared coffee rituals builds a feeling of community that supports mental resilience (Chang & McGonigle, 2020; Ni & Ishii, 2023). Whether through casual coffee breaks with colleagues or deeper discussions with friends, these interactions foster an environment where individuals feel valued and supported (Wang et al., 2019; Kišjuhas,

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2024). The shared appreciation for coffee creates a platform for authentic converstation, mutual understanding, and collective well-being (Candraningrum, 2019; Ridaryanthi et al., 2022; Hernández & Alvarez, 2024).

The collective experiences reveal how coffee-related social interactions are important to participants' strategies for maintaining mental health. Through the interplay of relaxation, connection, and belonging, coffee becomes more than a beverage; it serves as a medium for fostering interpersonal relationships and enhancing emotional well-being. These findings highlight coffee's significant role in facilitating supportive networks, enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of life with greater ease and positivity.

Coffee as a Structured Break

Incorporating coffee into daily routines offers more than refreshment; it creates purposeful pauses that enhance focus and well-being. This theme investigates how participants view coffee as a structured and intentional break that allows them to recharge and maintain productivity amidst demanding schedules.

Pause and Relaxation

The experience of taking a moment to pause with coffee provides individuals with a vital sense of respite amidst the demands of daily responsibilities. As mentioned by the participants:

> *"…it's quite effective for me because it gives me a moment to pause and take a break from the stress of managing a team and meeting deadlines…"* (CD-8)

> *"…coffee helps me take a moment to pause and relax which is very effective in managing my stress levels…"* (CD-10)

Coffee serves as an instrument for disengagement, creating a structured opportunity to step away from stress-inducing tasks (Kim et al., 2021; Maspul, 2023b). This intentional break not only aids in emotional regulation but also allows individuals to recalibrate their focus and approach challenges with renewed clarity (Bhumiratana et al., 2019). The act of pausing for coffee embodies a deliberate practice of self-care, where the routine itself becomes a calming ritual that mitigates stress and fosters a sense of balance (Ni & Ishii, 2023; Maspul, 2024b).

Managing Stress

In the context of managing stress, coffee becomes a pivotal mechanism for maintaining mental clarity during periods of heightened pressure. As indicated by the participants:

> *"…I do use coffee to help manage stress particularly during busy workdays…"* (CD-3)

> *"… I find this structured break essential for stress reduction and mental clarity…"* (CD-9)

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Offering a structured break gives individuals a moment to recalibrate their emotions and physical state (Bhumiratana et al., 2019; Maspul, 2024b). This routine cultivates a mental buffer against stressors, helping individuals navigate their work and responsibilities more effectively (Ferreira et al., 2021). The predictability and consistency of this coffee break contribute to a feeling of stability, which is essential in managing the unpredictable nature of demanding schedules (Kim et al., 2021; Pegado et al., 2022).

Focus and Energy Boost

The energizing properties of coffee sustain focus and energy during long and arduous tasks. As indicated by the participants:

> *"...it gives me a mental boost and helps me stay alert..."* (CD-2)

> *"...it helps me stay focused and energized..."* (CD-3)

Beyond its physiological effects, the ritual of consuming coffee reinforces a mental readiness to tackle challenges, enhancing both productivity and emotional resilience (Wang et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2021). This dual benefit of coffee as a stimulant and a structured pause exemplifies its multifaceted role in supporting cognitive and emotional functioning (Calvo et al., 2021; Acosta et al., 2024). The mental boost derived from coffee is intertwined with the symbolic significance of the break itself, as it aligns with individuals' coping strategies and their broader mental health needs (Ferreira et al., 2021).

The structured routine of coffee breaks encapsulates a holistic approach to stress management and mental well-being. Combining opportunities for relaxation, emotional recalibration, and cognitive enhancement, coffee emerges as an accessible and effective tool for navigating modern demands. This interplay between routine, focus, and emotional relief highlights the nuanced ways coffee consumption supports mental health, offering immediate and sustained benefits in managing stress and maintaining equilibrium.

The relationship between coffee consumption and mental health emerges as multifaceted, reflecting its role in addressing stress and fostering emotional well-being. For many, coffee serves as an instrument for managing stress and anxiety, with its ritualistic nature offering predictability and stability in chaotic environments. The act of preparing and consuming coffee provides a calming rhythm that allows individuals to ground themselves, while the stimulating properties of caffeine enhance focus and productivity, especially during high-pressure situations. This dynamic combination of physical and psychological benefits highlights coffee as a source of immediate relief and a contributor to sustained emotional resilience.

Beyond its effect, coffee also facilitates interpersonal connections that contribute to mental health. Shared experiences of drinking coffee—whether through casual meetups at coffee shops or meaningful conversations over a cup—offer relaxation, support, and a sense of belonging. These social interactions reinforce emotional stability by creating spaces for connection and mutual understanding. Coffee culture further promotes a sense of normalcy and comfort, as its predictable rituals provide a psychological anchor amidst the unpredictability of daily life. The interplay between its comforting routine and its role in socialization highlights its significance as a stabilizing force.

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Summary and Conclusion

The participants describe coffee as an integral component of their routines, embodying more than just a beverage but a consistent mental and emotional support source. It is perceived as a tool that facilitates personal well-being by lifting spirits during overwhelming moments, sharpening mental clarity, or providing a tranquil break during hectic days. These collective perceptions define coffee as a versatile companion in their lives, illustrating its role in balancing emotional, cognitive, and situational challenges. Through these insights, coffee drinking is seen as a meaningful activity that supports resilience and self-regulation.

Furthermore, the findings exhibit that coffee consumption is deeply integrated into participants' strategies for managing stress and enhancing emotional well-being. Coffee operates as a versatile mechanism that addresses immediate mental health needs while supporting broader social and personal stability patterns. Whether as a tool for self-care, a momentary escape, or a social facilitator, coffee consistently emerges as a meaningful contributor to participants' mental health practices, bridging the gap between individual coping and collective well-being. This intricate relationship underscores coffee's profound yet practical role in navigating modern stressors and maintaining psychological balance.

The study shows that coffee consumption transcends its function as a simple beverage, evolving into a multifaceted practice that supports mental health and well-being. Through its capacity to provide a structured break, foster comfort, and routine, and facilitate meaningful social interactions, coffee emerges as a versatile tool for navigating modern stressors and promoting emotional resilience. The significance of coffee lies not only in its physical and sensory effects but also in its symbolic and practical roles in fostering stability, connection, and mindfulness. By engaging in the rituals and culture surrounding coffee, individuals find pathways to manage stress, enhance focus, and strengthen their interpersonal connections, underscoring coffee's broader contribution to mental health.

Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the generalizability of its findings. The research was conducted solely within the Población area of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, restricting the geographical scope and potentially overlooking insights from regions or urban contexts with differing coffee cultures. Future studies could address this by expanding the research to include multiple locations with diverse cultural, social, and economic dynamics. Additionally, while providing in-depth qualitative insights, the small sample size of ten (10) participants may not fully represent the broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives among coffee enthusiasts. Subsequent studies could overcome this limitation by employing more extensive and varied participant pools to capture a broader range of experiences. Lastly, while experts validated the researcher-developed instrument, it may contain inherent biases or constraints affecting the depth and breadth of data collected. Refining the instrument through pilot testing across varied demographic groups and incorporating standardized tools could enhance reliability and comprehensiveness in future research.

Further Studies

Future research could explore coffee consumption's long-term psychological and physiological impacts, particularly in different sociocultural contexts and among diverse

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demographic groups. Investigating the interplay between coffee rituals and other stress-coping mechanisms could provide deeper insights into their combined effectiveness. Additionally, quantitative studies could complement the qualitative findings by measuring specific outcomes such as stress reduction, emotional well-being, or productivity by using existing tools and questionnaires. Examining the role of alternative beverages or comparing coffee consumption to other structured breaks could also provide a broader understanding of its unique contribution to mental health. Finally, exploring the effects of coffee culture in virtual or hybrid social environments could reflect its evolving role in contemporary mental health practices.

Informed Consent Statement: The authors declare that this study was conducted in full compliance with established ethical standards. The authors further ensure that informed consent was obtained from all participants, providing the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected. Privacy protection measures were implemented at every stage of the study to safeguard participant engagement and ensure the security of all information gathered.

Disclosure Statement: The authors acknowledge the use of AI tools (ChatGPT and Grammarly) to enhance the readability and presentation of the study. Additionally, NVivo was utilized for the qualitative data analysis, facilitating the systematic identification and categorizing of themes and data structuring. These tools did not influence the original content, analysis, and/or conclusions. The authors affirm that all analyses and interpretations were conducted with strict adherence to research ethics and academic standards.

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