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## Research Article

### Melting Pot or Salad Bowl: Metro Manila's Cultural Heterogeneity

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#### ABSTRACT

Metro Manila is the bustling capital of the Philippines that has varied cultural influences. This study determined the perceptions of 200 respondents from selected government and private companies' employees in the National Capital Region towards Metro Manila's Salad Bowl of Homogeneity and Cultural Heterogeneity. Concurrent Triangulation was utilized to gather the perceptions of 200 government and private companies' employees and corroborate findings within the study. Based on the results, people who keep in touch with their immediate kin and sometimes visit home to celebrate usual practices have the highest mean score of 3.25. On the other hand, people who were born in Metro Manila to parents who were from provinces thrive to learn about their native culture and family practices have the lowest mean score of 2.12, such that Metro Manila is a cultural melting pot due to its cultural heterogeneity. Metro Manila is a blend of the world's culture, food, and languages, and diverse way of life.

**Keywords:** *Metro Manila, cultural heterogeneity, salad bowl, melting pot.*

#### Background

Many of the Philippines cultural influences are rooted in the previous colonization, derived from the culture of Spain and the USA (Gilmore, 2000) The country has a rich history with a unique cultural heritage. Like any postcolonial country, Philippine culture is a melting pot of all its colonial masters with a base that consists of its long, indigenous history (Thao, 2018). For 300 years, the Philippines belonged to the Spanish crown – many vestiges are still visible in the old city of Intramuros (Linder, 1990; Cuyugan et al, 2017). It is a culture that is difficult to pin down since it is so diverse; the Western influences may appear to be dominant but

at close inspection, it is a mere skin over a pulsing archipelagic culture (Sahakian & Dunand, 2015). The country's many languages underline the numerous narratives that exist in the Philippines, each language delineating a locale (Galuszka, 2014; Tadeo et al, 2017).

Metro Manila is the bustling capital of the Philippines, a country that has varied cultural influences. In Metro Manila, people classify them as civilized, in contrast with other regional immigrants and cultural minorities (Rosaldo, 1988; Austria et al, 2015). Over the years, the city was seen as the Melting-Pot of War, as the Philippines was preoccupied by

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American forces, though only after the path had been blasted by bombing, leaving the old city of Manila a smoking ruin (Tinker, 1977). The escalation of racial hostility and conflict, and of cultural identification has been overwhelmed by other forms of cultural identification open to a free people in a nation with a tradition of tolerance (Linder, 1990) so that they become ethnically indistinguishable from the original inhabitants after a few generations, a process that is exemplified by the 'melting pot' when members of such groups interact, their subjective cultures may not overlap either in content or inactions (Bochner, 1982). Accordingly, the state and the Metro Manila administration, in particular, has to devise policies taking the articulated interests of the urban poor into consideration (Berner & Korff, 1995; Dasig et al, 2017) to the ways in which diasporic, hyphenated and hybridized identities are being formed across metropolitan cities (Montiel & Macapagal, 2011). Despite the colonization, Filipino culture is very evident and has largely been applauded in many parts of the world (Craig & King, 2010). Despite all of these influences, the old Asian culture of Filipinos has been retained and is clearly seen in their way of life, beliefs, and customs. Melting pot was defined as a sociology concept where different groups of people can be found (Ambrosio et al.; Dasig, 2014). The United States Bureau of the Census also referred to melting pot as a monocultural metaphor for a heterogeneous society becoming more homogeneous, the different elements "melting together" with a common culture; an alternative being a homogeneous society becoming more heterogeneous through the influx of foreign elements with different cultural backgrounds, possessing the potential to create disharmony within the previous culture (United States Bureau of the Census, 1995). In the study of (McDonald, 2007), melting pot was used as the melting-together as a metaphor in the 1780s, while (Samovar et al, 2011) posited that the term "melting pot" came into general usage in the United States after it was used as a metaphor describing a fusion of nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities in the 1908 play of the same name. However, (Meien, 2007) argued that the desirability of assimilation and the melting pot model has been rejected by

proponents of multiculturalism, such that alternative metaphors were suggested to describe the current American society, such as a salad bowl, or kaleidoscope, in which different cultures mix, but remain distinct in some aspects (McDonald, 2007). Further, the melting pot continues to be used as an assimilation model in vernacular and political discourse along with more inclusive models of assimilation in the academic debates on identity, adaptation, and integration of immigrants into various political, social, and economic spheres (Caves, 2004; Pahayahay et al, 2017)

On the other hand, the salad bowl theory is a metaphor for the way a multicultural society can integrate different cultures while maintaining their separate identities (Bobbie, 2010; Dasig et al.). In the salad bowl model, different cultures are brought together—like salad ingredients—but do not form together into a single homogeneous culture; each culture keeps its own distinct qualities (Edinburgh: April 1964; Dasig, 2017). In essence, being a Filipino does not inherently tie a person to a single culture, though rather to citizenship and loyalty to the Philippines. Thus, one does not need to abandon their cultural heritage in order to be considered "Tagalog" known to be living in Metro Manila or Katagalugan regions (Montiel, 2011). It is important not to lose your cultural identity while living in a new city or country.

This study focused on the selected government and private companies' employees in the National Capital Region perceptions towards Metro Manila's Salad Bowl of homogeneity and cultural heterogeneity. The cultural elements considered herein include the values and beliefs; principles and important aspects of lifestyle; customs; holidays, clothing, greetings, typical rituals, and activities; marriage and family; government and law; games and leisure; economy and trade; language, food, and Religion. As such, it would be of great significance that the government and private companies' employees will take the initiative to better and craft inclusive and comprehensive programs and hold on to their cultural heritage and live successfully in Metro Manila while creating new meaningful connections with other cultures. The results of this study may also be used as a reference towards culturally sensitive

community programs and inclusive development in Metro Manila.

## Methods

The researcher used a mixed of quantitative and qualitative research design and Concurrent Triangulation approach (Dasig et al, 2014) was used to determine the perceptions of the respondents from selected government and private companies' employees in the National Capital Region towards Metro Manila's Salad Bowl of homogeneity and cultural heterogeneity, and to corroborate findings within the study. Purposive sampling (Dasig, 2014; Austria et al, 2015) was utilized to gather the perceptions of 200 government and private companies' employees using the researcher's developed questionnaire.

Research ethical practices were considered by the researcher during the conduct of the study such as informed consent from the par-

ticipants of the study, Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality Agreement, data privacy, and confidentiality compliance to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Pitogo & Ching, 2018) . Data were gathered using Google Form administered online using the respondents' emails and social media accounts. Data were analysed using frequency and percentage distribution, mean, and rank.

## Results and Discussions

### *Demographic profile of the respondents*

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

The majority of the respondents 68 or 34 % belong to the age group of 31- 40 years old. The respondents were dominated by males comprising of 112 or 56% and 88 or 44% were females respectively. This trend is also observed in the Gender Statistics of the Philippine Statistics Authority among wage and salary workers (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2021)

*Table 1. Demographic profile of the Respondents (N=200)*

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Age	21- 30 years old	25	13
	31- 40 years old	68	34
	41- 50 years old	55	28
	51- 60 years old	42	21
	61 and older	10	5
Gender	Male	88	44
	Female	112	56
Civil Status	Sigle	124	62
	Married	61	31
	Widow/Widower	15	8
Highest Educational Attainment	Doctorate graduate	35	18
	MS/MA Graduate	65	33
	Bachelor's Degree Graduate	100	50
Years of Work Experience	1- 10 years	93	47
	11- 20 years	45	23
	21- 30 years	35	18
	31- 40 years	14	7
	41- 50 years	10	5
	51 or more years	3	2
Regional Origin	Luzon	98	49
	Visayas	45	23
	Mindanao	48	24
	Bangsamoro	9	5

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Years of Stay in Metro Manila	1-10 year	59	30
	11-20 years	87	44
	21-30 years	54	27
Status of Employment	Regular/Permanent	130	65
	Contractual/ Probationary	58	29
	Project-based	12	6
Employer	Government	87	44
	Private Company	113	57
Monthly Gross Income (P)	More than 100,000.00	12	6
	75,000- 99,999.00	15	8
	50,000- 74,999.00	27	14
	40,000- 49,999.00	20	10
	30,000- 39,999.00	23	12
	20,000- 29,999.00	35	18
	10,000- 19,999.00	68	34

The majority of the respondents 124 or 62% were single. The majority of the respondents 100 or 50% were college graduates. The majority of the respondents 93 or 47% were working for 1 - 10 years already. The majority of the respondents 98 or 49% were from Luzon since Metro Manila as the economic and bustling capital of the country is located in Luzon. The majority 87 or 44% have been living in Metro Manila for 11-20 years already. The majority of the respondents 130 or 65 % were Regular/Permanent employees. The majority of the respondents 113 or 57 % were employed in the government. In terms of monthly gross income, most of the respondents 68 or 34% earn 10,000- 19,999.00 pesos, while a very small percentage 6% or 12 earns 100,000 above.

### ***Perceptions of the respondents on metro manila as a salad bowl of homogeneity***

Table 2 represents the perceptions of the government and private companies' employees in the National Capital Region about Metro Manila as a Salad Bowl of Homogeneity.

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (Unesco) opens with a characteristic statement

"the cultural heritage and the natural heritage are among the priceless and irreplaceable possessions, not only of each nation but of mankind as a whole. The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most prized possessions constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples in the world.

Generally, 200 respondents rated their perceptions at an average mean of 2.72 interpreted as agree. This implies that migrants in Metro Manila from the provinces in the Philippines can integrate their different cultures to Metro Manila's multicultural practices while maintaining their separate cultural identities.

Among the 8 statements about Metro Manila as a Salad Bowl of Homogeneity, item number 3- *People keep in touch with their immediate kin and sometimes visit home to celebrate usual practices* has the highest mean score of 3.25 with a descriptive interpretation of strongly agree. The majority of the respondents have positive perceptions that keeping in touch with immediate kin and visiting home will help them stay connected with their old home and culture; thus, enable them to feel connected with both their native home and that of Metro Manila's cultures.

Table 2. *Perceptions of the Respondents towards Metro Manila as a Salad Bowl of Homogeneity*

Statements about Metro Manila as a Salad Bowl of Homogeneity	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. People maintain their native language/dialect at home and even in the workplace.	2.84	Agree	3
2. People follow their local usual practices and patterns at home and in the workplace.	2.96	Agree	2
3. People keep in touch with their immediate kin and sometimes visit home to celebrate usual practices	3.25	Strongly Agree	1
4. People maintain their interests developed in their native province.	2.68	Agree	5
5. People join a group with a focus and tied on their dialect, culture, and patterns they're doing back home.	2.56	Agree	7
6. People embrace their cultural traditions even in they are living in Metro Manila.	2.78	Agree	4
7. People who were born in Metro Manila to parents who were from provinces thrive to learn about their native culture and family practices.	2.12	Disagree	8
8. People share their culture with new friends and colleagues	2.60	Agree	6
Overall Mean	2.72	Agree	

1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree, 1.75-2.49- Disagree, 2.50-3.24- Agree, 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree

Accordingly, salad bowl such as respondents' description to Metro Manila as a multicultural society can integrate different cultures while maintaining their separate identities (Bobbie, 2010). Looking at the result of this study, social scientists can use it to design and implement inclusive and comprehensive programs for the multicultural communities in Metro Manila.

On the other hand, the statement that received the lowest mean score was item 7- *People who were born in Metro Manila to parents who were from provinces thrive to learn about their native culture and family practices* with a mean score of 2.12 interpreted as disagree. Respondents believed that immigration and urbanization have changed the fabric of Metro Manila's culture, and those who were born in Metro Manila should overcome the barriers in living in inclusive and respectful communities.

### ***Perceptions of the respondents on metro manila's cultural heterogeneity***

Table 3 presents the perceptions of the government and private companies' employees in

the National Capital Region about Metro Manila's Cultural Heterogeneity.

Generally, 200 respondents rated their perceptions at an average mean of 3.32 interpreted as strongly agree. This implies that Metro Manila has the mixed of cultures, language, foods, music, and diverse communities.

Among the 8 statements about Metro Manila's Cultural Heterogeneity, item number 7- *Metro Manila is where every culture in the world blends, where it is easy to find food from around the planet* has the highest mean score of 3.76 with a descriptive interpretation of strongly agree. The majority of the respondents believed that Metro Manila is a blend of the world's culture, food and languages.

On the other hand, the statement that received the lowest mean score was item 8- *Metro Manila is a blend of the world's music, people and foods with a mean score of 2.67 interpreted as agree*. Respondents believed that Metro Manila is a blend of music, people, and food.

Table 3. Perceptions of the Respondents towards Metro Manila's Cultural Heterogeneity

Statements about Metro Manila's Cultural Heterogeneity	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Metro Manila is a place where immigrants and people from all over the world visit and live and share thoughts and ideas to create one big new culture.	3.21	Agree	5
2. Aside from being the bustling capital of the country, Metro Manila is at the forefront of technology, and in particular became a melting pot of inventiveness.	3.45	Strongly Agree	3
3. Metro Manila has a wide array of people that come from different backgrounds, lifestyles, social experiences, races, and religions.	3.12	Agree	7
4. Metro Manila is a place where different people or different cultures all come together and begin to merge and mix, creating a new culture, adopted a new culture, and promoted a strong and vibrant country made up of components from many different backgrounds.	3.21	Agree	5
5. Metro Manila is a blend of the strengths of many cultures that allowed the country to prevail against monolithic cultures.	3.67	Strongly Agree	2
6. Metro Manila is a city where innovation and innovation never sleeps, where equal opportunities are offered, and where big and small dreams are realized.	3.45	Strongly Agree	3
7. Metro Manila is where every culture in the world blends, where it is easy to find food from around the planet.	3.76	Strongly Agree	1
8. Metro Manila is a blend of the world's music, people and foods.	2.67	Agree	8
Overall Mean	3.32	Strongly Agree	

1.00-1.74- Strongly Disagree, 1.75-2.49- Disagree, 2.50-3.24- Agree, 3.25-4.00- Strongly Agree

## Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of the study, it can be gleaned that Metro Manila is a cultural melting pot due to its cultural heterogeneity. The majority of the respondents believed that Metro Manila is a blend of the world's culture, food, and languages, and diverse way of life.

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