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<b>Title</b>	COMMUNICATION AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE: EXPLORING THE MEANING OF SMOKING AMONG FARMWORKERS IN SITIO LALAWAN, MALAYBALAY CITY, BUKIDNON
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## ABSTRACT

Smoking is a major health risk that affects both smokers and non-smokers. Although extensive studies on smoking, mostly quantitative, have been carried out worldwide, little is known about the smoking phenomenon in the Philippines, especially in rural areas, wherein smoking is highly prevalent. Through the sociocultural lens, this qualitative study was undertaken using the narrative approach to identify the meaning of smoking among the farmworkers of Sitio Lalawan, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. Individual open interview among seven participants was used as the means for data collection. The interview transcripts were then analyzed through restorying and narrative thematic analysis, which yielded five themes, representing their meanings of smoking. For the farmworkers, smoking was a parent and peer's influence, a means to manage negative feelings and emotions, a thought provoker and organizer, a culture among friends, and an integral part of life. These findings demonstrated that family and peer smoking resulted in behavior modeling. Smoking was a coping mechanism when they experienced all types of life problems that caused stress. Smoking aided them at work by improving their mental capacities, thereby boosting productivity and efficiency. Socializing with smoker friends formed a culture, wherein they observed social norms, namely smoking while conversing, sharing cigarettes, and looking for ways to obtain cigarettes or find their alternatives. Ultimately, smoking was an inseparable component of their lives; it is attributed to the previously mentioned meanings alongside nicotine dependence, perceived ill outcomes of smoking cessation, and the absence of perceptible evidence, displayed by family members who smoked, that smoking damages the health. In conclusion, smoking is their life and breaking it would seriously result in unweaving the social fabric that binds the members of the farming community. Public health experts, concerned agencies, development communication practitioners, and the local government unit of Malaybalay are enjoined to consider these findings in crafting or improving smoking cessation programs and campaigns and strengthening current smoking policies intended for the farmworkers.

Keywords: Farmworkers, Meaning-making, Narrative Inquiry, Smoking